A Two-Tiered Approach to a Buddy Reading Programme for Struggling Adolescent Readers

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Abstract

This thesis reports on a study of the effects of a two-tiered Buddy Reading Programme on the reading skills of 12 to 14 year old middle school students in a high-poverty urban school in a Midwestern United States school. The research took place during one school year with white and African American students.

The research, influenced by action research, was in the form of a Buddy Reading intervention programme using a reciprocal teaching model, within a constructivist paradigm.

The key finding of the study was that the social nature of the programme allowed the middle school students to rehearse texts, engage in dialogue surrounding texts, and led to improvement in the affective aspects of reading, as well as in reading skills. This social aspect led many of the students to engage in literacy activities beyond those required either for the programme or in classroom instruction.

A second finding of the study was that a comprehensive, balanced approach to literacy instruction was effective for simulating the process of reading for the struggling readers and leading them to emulate the reading processes of proficient readers. Through the programme, the students were immersed in a literacy-rich environment and interacted with texts in a positive, natural way.

Dedicated to my father, Byron Taylor, a once struggling

reader who taught me the power of books,

and to my mother, Peggy Taylor, who still reads aloud to me

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List of Abbreviations

AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
BRP	Buddy Reading Programme
GEI	General Education Intervention
IRB	Internal Review Board
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
ISTEP	Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress
LA	Local Authorities
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NCTE	National Council of Teachers of English
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
NRP	National Reading Panel
PALS	Peer Assisted Learning Strategies
PTO	Parent Teacher Organization
SSR	Self Selected Reading
STAR Reading	formerly: Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading
WMS	Woodview Middle School
wpm	Words per Minute
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

Teaching and Teaching Reading

When I began teaching in the autumn of 2001, I was fresh out of university with a major in English Education. I was looking forward to teaching good literature: Wordsworth, Poe, Hawthorne, Whitman, and all of the other authors who had led me to a love of literature. I imagined the deep discussions I would have with my students about theme and style and author motivation. I felt well-prepared to teach English literature. I was not prepared, however, for the students I faced.

I began my teaching career in an urban middle school (grades six through eight, ages 11 through 14) with a high poverty rate. Approximately 65 percent of the students at the school received free or reduced lunch, while the state average was 23.7 percent that year. I quickly found that my students were not very interested in Wordsworth or Poe, and even if they had been could not have read these texts independently. A majority of the students in my class read at least two years below grade level. This caused them to struggle not only in their English class, but also in other content areas, where the textbooks were too difficult for them. Nothing in my four years at university had prepared me to teach reading; I was prepared to teach *literature*.

Besides reading below grade level, issues they faced in reading included a lack of fluency, a lack of comprehension, a lack of motivation to read, and an inability to discuss literature at a higher level. I spent much of my first year of teaching wondering what was wrong with these students. I spent a great deal of time that year throwing my hands in the air and telling my colleagues, friends, and anyone else who would listen "These kids can't read!" I spent an equal amount of time on-line looking for another teaching

position – sure that the problem of reading was unique to my school and that a change of setting would improve the problem – at least for me. I began my career believing the students had a deficit that had been caused by their families or their previous teachers or their own lack of motivation.

Why do so many students from high poverty homes struggle with reading? One reason is that the children have never been read to before they enter school. Jim Trelease, (1995, p. 14) explains:

> *For the child who is not read to in the home, the first meeting with meaningful print comes in school. Usually that is when he has his first taste of reading "unpleasure" as he goes into business for himself – sound by sound, syllable by syllable, word by word, - learning how to read. The danger is that, with nothing to compare it to, the child begins to think this is what reading is about: skills sheets, workbooks, flash cards, and test scores. And these are not motivators*.

Fortunately, sometime during that year of trying many things that did not work and of trying things my own teachers had done, I changed my mind about leaving the school and came to the realization that the students could not change unless I did something to change my instruction. That summer I attended every available professional development activity, read every professional book I could find, and began planning changes to my instruction. Since then, I have continued to research the best methods for teaching reading and have implemented the ideas to improve my classroom instruction. Now my goal is for my students to become what I call *real readers*; that is readers who engage with texts, make meaning, discuss texts, are self-motivated to read, read for a variety of reasons, use a variety of reading strategies to develop fluency and make meaning, and develop the behaviours of life long readers. Real readers engage with texts beyond the low level comprehension that is often tested by reading assessments.

The method I now use is a comprehensive balanced literacy approach to instruction, which will be discussed fully in Chapter 2. In this method, in the form of reading and writing workshop, a combination of different types of literacy instructional methods are used in order to better reach the needs of each student. Differentiation is inherent in this model. In a reading workshop setting, the focus is not so much on learning specific texts well, as it is on learning to approach any type of text strategically and to make meaning. The goal of a workshop approach is to develop strong real readers rather than students who can simply answer low level comprehension questions about texts. Real readers are less concerned with the colour of Corduroy, the story bear's button, for example, than with making meaning from the text that can later be related to other texts and to real life situations. Likewise, the purpose of a writing workshop is to develop the skills that writers use, rather than teaching students to fill in the blanks or write a five paragraph essay.

Elements of comprehensive balanced literacy include a combination of teacher guided reading and student self-selected reading of texts, as well as writing instruction, phonics as needed, and vocabulary instruction. A class using this model of instruction includes a classroom library and a print-rich environment. A comprehensive balanced literacy approach does not so much change *what* is taught as *how* it is taught. I began implementing a comprehensive balanced literacy approach in my classroom in the autumn of 2002, the year after the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was passed in the United States. This legislation cast a shadow of testing over the school. In spite of more testing, I quickly began to see a difference in my students' learning and in my own teaching as a result of implementing a comprehensive balanced literacy approach. Since

then, I have continued to learn more about teaching students to read through professional development, professional reading, attending a National Writing Project summer institute, and working on my master's degree, in which I earned a reading specialist license. I have continued to tweak and improve my classroom instruction and I have seen results. Between 2004 and 2008, students who were in my classroom scored an average of 15 percent higher on their standardized tests than the other students in the building who were not in a classroom that was using a comprehensive balanced approach.

My change in thinking about reading and reading instruction and my metamorphosis from an English literature teacher into a reading and writing teacher affected my classroom practice and led me to this research study in an attempt to better understand and articulate my developing understanding of what 'real reading' is, to better understand the effects of classroom practices and interventions on students' reading ability, and to fill a gap that I saw within my own school.

Context of the Study

Woodview Middle School

This research study took place at Woodview Middle School (WMS) in the Midwestern United States. WMS is a sixth through eighth grade building, and is one of four middle schools in the city. At the time of the study there were approximately 470 students and 35 classroom teachers in the building. Approximately 63% of the students were white, 32% African American, 3% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. Woodview Middle School is part a school corporation that comprises all of the government funded public schools within the city limits. At the beginning of the study, eleven elementary schools, four middle schools, one alternative school, and one high school made up the corporation.

Each individual school has a principal and at least one assistant principal. A superintendent and an assistant superintendent administer all of the schools. The school corporation is the largest of five public school corporations in the county.

Grant writing is valued at Woodview Middle School. Woodview teachers had earned over 12,000 USD in grants for their classrooms during the three years prior to the beginning of this study, and an additional 13,000 USD during the first year of this study. Grants are typically teacher initiated and involve very little involvement from the administration.

Because the teachers at WMS are willing to try new things and accepting of new programmes, it was an optimum setting for this research study. The teachers and administration realize the effects of poverty on student success, and are willing, to some extent, to work toward finding new methods to better educate students. Teacher-initiated projects are typically supported by the administration, although the administrators usually take no actual involvement in the programmes.

I have had some opportunities to observe the other English teachers in my building teach as part of new teacher mentoring and peer coaching initiatives. (English and language arts classes include literature, writing, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar. The two terms, 'English' and 'language arts' are used interchangeably.) As part of the mentoring and coaching, my role was to observe their teaching, help them evaluate their own practice through self-reflection, and plan upcoming professional development based on teacher needs. There are two teachers who teach seventh grade and one other eighth grade general education English teacher, who have no specific responsibility for teaching special or gifted education. These teachers have each taught between one and twenty or

more years. All of the teachers have had opportunities for both mandatory and optional professional development in literacy. From my observations, two of the classrooms are very traditional, that is most literature instruction is teacher led and round robin reading is most often used. Round robin reading is a method in which the first student in the first row reads the first paragraph, the second student reads the next paragraph, and so on. One of the teachers indicated that she used round robin reading because then she knew the students had completed the reading. The literature instruction in these two classrooms includes teacher led discussion with the teacher asking questions, which may or may not then be answered by students. Most work done by students is independent. One of these teachers has a classroom library of about 500 books but indicated that students only use it when they finish an assignment. The other teacher has approximately one hundred books for a classroom library, but as I visited her room throughout the year, the books remained in boxes behind her desk and were not used by students. In both classrooms most of the walls are blank, although a few store-bought posters hang in one of the rooms.

The third English classroom uses a mixture of traditional instructional techniques and some elements of a reading workshop. Instruction is primarily teacher directed, and most student work is independent. However, there are some opportunities for collaborative work. In this classroom, each nine-week grading period ends with a comprehensive test of the literature that has been studied that quarter. The test questions focus on the specific characters and plots of the literature that has been read. The teacher has a large classroom library and allows students to borrow the books. She also indicated that one day a week students have time to read in class and one day a week she gives a

book talk using a book she thinks students may be interested in. When she gives a book talk, she shows them the cover of the book, tells them the title and author, and gives a brief synopsis or reads aloud a snippet from the book in order to whet students' reading appetites and to interest them in a specific title. This classroom has a Word Wall, a posted and growing list of vocabulary terms that students are learning during the school year. It also has a 'graffiti book wall' on which students can write titles of favourite books as well as a brief reason their classmates should read it. A few samples of student work are displayed in the hallway.

Although these teachers have all had opportunities for professional development and have learned strategies for effective literacy instruction, from my observations, it does not seem that they have yet internalized a more comprehensive approach to literacy instruction. As I began to plan my study, I wanted the programme to help to fill a gap I saw in the English classroom instruction that I had observed – the gap of a comprehensive balanced approach to instruction. In addition to benefitting the students who participated in the Buddy Reading Program, this study has implications for improving the professional development of other teachers. Because a comprehensive balanced approach to literacy instruction is the most effective type of literacy instruction, an emphasis of professional development could be on developing a more comprehensive programme in English language arts classrooms.

The School Principal and Instruction

At the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year, in which I began the Buddy Reading Programme, my principal made an announcement that surprised me on the first day of school. He told all of the teachers that they should begin the school year by

teaching students procedures and rules, as always, and then immediately begin preparation for the state assessment, which was six weeks away. To him, test preparation meant using packaged testing materials available from the state Department of Education website. The materials were tests from past years and sample item questions. My principal's intent was that our entire instruction for six weeks be from these materials, and that we put students into mock–testing situations for the entire six weeks.

To me, this seemed a ridiculous proposal. To teach in this manner does not give students the skills they need for long-term learning. Tymms (2004, p. 491) suggests that "teaching test technique will have a limited short-term impact on year-on-year test results as teachers train their children to take these tests". Allington (2006) adds that standardized tests do not truly evaluate reading skill. This is because most of the questions on the test are low-level comprehension-type questions, which do nothing to encourage or evaluate 'real reading,' which involves engagement with the text, asking questions, inferring, predicting, clarifying, and evaluating. None of these skills is required by the standardized test. Because I want my students to become real readers I found it unconscionable, as well as boring for all of us, to teach using only testing materials for six weeks.

However, I had a directive from my principal to teach classroom procedures and then begin test preparation. I understood his intention – schools, and especially principals, are under pressure to raise test scores every year, and Woodview Middle School certainly needed to raise test scores. The problem was a philosophical difference in what type of instruction actually raises the test scores. To him, test preparation raised the scores. To me, consistent, strong instruction raised test scores.

I decided to follow the intent of his directive, if not the letter of it. I provided instruction during the first six weeks of school that led to improved test scores. The first few days of school I began as I always do – by introducing the students to each other, myself, my expectations, and the classroom procedures. By about the fourth day of school I was ready to begin introducing my students to the reading and writing workshop, which is the method of comprehensive balanced literacy instruction used in my classroom. Students read and wrote for their own purposes and became better at each skill. Creating a classroom workshop in which student can work independently does not happen overnight. I have found that it takes about four to five weeks before students become comfortable with it and can begin to work independently.

I began reading instruction by teaching students an overview of genres and teaching them how to select their own books. Independently, students began selecting and reading their own books daily during the second week of school. I focused guided reading on nonfiction and informational texts because students typically have more trouble with nonfiction than narrative, and because the texts they read in their other classes are primarily nonfiction. I was providing instruction that would aid students on the state test, but also instruction that fit into my plan for the rest of the year.

Students borrowed books from my classroom library of about 3,000 books in a variety of genres. Each week on Monday and Tuesday for 30-35 minutes and on Friday for 10-15 minutes, students had time in class to read their self-selected books. Their homework was to read their book for at least thirty minutes five nights a week. Each year it takes a few weeks for students to become accustomed to this routine, but I have found that providing class time to read shows students that I value reading and helps them

become interested in their books so that they want to read independently. By about the fourth week of school, the students were comfortable with this routine and reading daily had become part of their schedule. Each day Monday through Friday, I read aloud to students for about 10 minutes of the class period. I read a variety of texts, including articles, poetry and nonfiction, but typically selected longer pieces that were read over several weeks because I then used them to model to students how to engage with a longer text and the types of dialogue that a reader has with the text. I also modelled fluency, rereading, what to do when stuck, and internal dialogue with a text. The worksheet based comprehension level instruction that my principal was advocating did not promote dialogue or 'real reading' skills.

Each day in my classroom, students participated in a brief vocabulary activity that included studying idioms and analogies and included pulling unknown words from texts to place on the classroom Word Wall. The students had visual access to these words throughout the year, and eventually began using them in their own speech and writing. The days that students were not doing self-selected reading in class, I presented a guided reading lesson of some sort. This instruction included teaching a specific reading skill or strategy within a text. Therefore the actual texts I taught were not as important as *how* I taught students to approach the text. I could teach reading skills using poetry, nonfiction, drama, short story, or folklore, and did use a variety of genres throughout the year. It was not as important that I taught, for example, "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe, as how I taught students to approach that text. By teaching reading skills and strategies, I was teaching them to be prepared for any text that they might face.

This leads us back to the standardized tests. Because the students in my classroom learned how to approach any text, they were better prepared to do well on the test than those students who spent the first six weeks of school doing test preparation activities. The students in my classroom had a variety of strategies for working with and thinking about the text at a higher level.

The year that I implemented the Buddy Reading Programme at Woodview Middle School, the students faced 31 days of standardized testing out of 180 school days. This included two state assessments, three benchmark assessments of reading, and three predictor tests that were intended to predict which students would and would not pass the state test. Typically the state assessment, the test that really counts, is administered only once per school year. Through 2008, this test was given in the autumn and students were tested on the previous year's learning. In 2008, the state government decided to move the test to the spring so it would be more in line with other states. However, under the No Child Left Behind legislation, a state assessment must be administered every calendar year. This led to two sets of standardized tests during the 2008-2009 school year – one in the autumn and one in the spring.

This amount of testing was difficult for the teachers and the students alike. For teachers, each monthly teachers' meeting during the year was spent looking at test scores, which students did not pass, which subgroups (for example, race, special education, free and reduced lunch) did not pass, which students were right on the 'bubble' within ten points above or below the cut score for passing, and which students needed remedial instruction to push them up a few points into the passing zone. The major problem with this was that, aside from the amount of time spent looking at the data to the exclusion of

all other instruction, all we ever did was look at the numbers. There was no discussion of exactly what the numbers meant or how to use the scores to guide our classroom instruction. We simply looked at the numbers, which were static. My principal's solution to remediation for the 'bubble kids' (Ho, 2008) was to give them more test-preparation materials.

As I planned the Buddy Reading Programme, which began in October about two months into the school year, I wanted to find a way to provide strong instruction in 'real reading' to the struggling readers in the school who might not be receiving strong, consistent literacy instruction in their English/ language arts class. As I planned the programme, based on my literature review, I determined which elements of literacy instruction seemed to be most necessary and would fit well within the programme. I began working out a schedule that would include as many of these elements as possible. For students who had spent the first six weeks of school in classrooms that did only standardized test preparation, I hoped the programme would fill in some of the gaps in their literacy instruction and help them become real readers.

Societal Expectations and Educational Legislation

Poor Results

"Education has become a 'hot button' of attention in the public arena because it is considered to be at least part of the solution to many social and economic problems" (Earl *et al,* 2000, p. 7). Tatum (2005, p. 15) suggests that increased reading achievement will provide students with greater opportunities, lower levels of unemployment, a lower number of violent crimes and incarcerations, and increased college enrolments. Reading is "the ultimate weapon" that will destroy ignorance, poverty, and despair (Trelease,

1995, p. xxvi). According to Goodwyn and Findlay (2003, p. 29), literacy is "a means of individual and group empowerment, a vehicle for cultural and economic participation in the discourses that shape our lives". All of these authors suggest that there is a great hope that this generation will improve the ills of our society through reading. There is a great (and perhaps unrealistic) expectation that today's schools will provide all of the skills necessary to bring new levels of economic independence, improved social wellbeing, and technological competence necessary for a new millennium.

Yet newspaper headlines and government studies declare a rise in failing schools, failing teachers, and failing students – especially in the area of reading. Less that one-third of U.S. students test at a proficient level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam (Carbo, 2008). Less than fifty percent of students who took the ACT college entrance exam in 2005 performed at a ready-for-college reading level (NCTE, 2007), and students enter college ill prepared for reading tasks (Lewin, 2007). There is a continuing achievement gap between white and African-American students in 8^{th} and 12^{th} grades (NCTE, 2007). Both white and African-American students scored lower in 2005 than in 1992, according to NAEP results (NCTE, 2007). Student interest in reading drops from 100 percent in kindergarten to 54 percent in fourth grade, 30 percent in eighth grade, and only 19 percent in twelfth grade (Trelease, 2006). Students and adults are not reading (Fram, 2007). The United States' share of college-educated workers has fallen from 30 percent of the global workforce to only 14 percent (NCTE, 2007). About one third of all children face "significant difficulty" in learning to read (Mathes *et al*, 1998, p. 62).

These numbers have caused alarm, and have led to federal legislation in the United States including the No Child Left Behind Act. The act also addressed "increased accountability for students outcomes, expanded flexibility and control at the local level, additional choices for parents, and an emphasis on proven teaching methods;" and goes on to say that "every child will read at or above grade level by the end of third grade" (Morgan, 2006, p. 1). In reality, under this legislation, states require more testing of students and tie school funding to yearly improvement of test scores. However, more testing does not address the real issues of reading. More importantly, as Perkins and Cooter (2005) point out, we must realize that it is skilled teachers who help students become successful readers not programmes or tests.

After England began testing seven year olds in 1991, the press announced that 28 percent of children could not read which led to public debates over literacy, increased government interest in literacy, and a prescriptive approach to teaching phonics (Soler and Openshaw, 2007). This approach, the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) of 1998 (Department for Education, 1997) and a precursor of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), was written as a 'teacher proof' model of literacy instruction in reaction to international comparisons of student reading abilities and to the suggestion through the 1990s that 'whole language' lowered literacy standards (Soler and Openshaw, 2007). Marlow (2002) suggests that these scripted teacher proof programmes have eliminated time for purposeful thinking and meaningful dialogue in classrooms and demonstrate a shift away from valuing teachers as thinkers. Soler and Openshaw (2007) suggest that after England's 1997 Literacy Task Force emphasized phonics, leading to an emphasis on phonics in the NLS, legislators believed that students would achieve higher

levels of literacy and become proficient readers if NLS guidelines were followed. Because phonics can demonstrate quantifiable outcomes, it is believed that phonics leads to higher standards than other instructional approaches (Soler and Openshaw, 2007).

Long before either NLS (Department for Education, 1997) or NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) were implemented, McNiff (1993, p. 24) wrote:

> *There seems to be a prevailing view ... that education is an object ... that we aim at, and once acquired will result in the production of the 'educated person'. This view is being reinforced by aspects of current legislation that emphasize criterion – referenced schedules of attainment, and by aspects of teacher – appraisal schemes that operate in behavioural terms – how well teachers do in specific tasks, for example. In this view, education is a thing to be acquired by a learner*.

This idea of education as a 'thing' suggests that it can be carefully controlled. It does not take into account the realities of student background, school setting, cognitive levels, motivation, self-efficacy, effort, and the other qualitative issues that affect student learning in a classroom. The good intentions of the National Literacy Strategy (Department for Education, 1997) and No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) have done little to increase student achievement and have stifled much teacher creativity (Tymms, 2004).

No Child Left Behind

Passed in the United States in 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) recognized the discrepancies in education between schools that served higher income students and schools that served lower income students. NCLB called for this achievement gap to be closed, and by the 2013-2014 school year for all students to be 100 percent proficient (Kim and Saunderman, 2005), as measured by standardized state assessment tests. In the assertion that all students can

succeed, NCLB is commendable (Cummings, 2007), and as a teacher in a high-poverty school I have a personal stake in seeing student improvement. Kim and Saunderman (2005) suggest that there is widespread support for the goals of NCLB by politicians, schools, teachers, and families, but that the actual effects of it have been most devastating to the schools it was designed to help.

Under NCLB, schools are required to meet Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP. In order to meet AYP, a school's test scores must improve each year. By the 2013-2014 school year, all students and all schools are to meet the same academic standards (Kim and Saunderman, 2005), that is, proficiency of 100 percent of the students in the school. The second part of AYP looks specifically at subgroups of students within a school. These subgroups include African American, Hispanic, Asian, and other races, as well as low income (measured through the percentage of students receiving free and reduced price lunch), and special education. In order to meet AYP a school's test scores must not only increase each year, but each subgroup must also improve (Kim and Saunderman, 2005). A school that raises scores in all areas but one subgroup has not met AYP for the year. Schools that do not meet AYP for two consecutive years are placed "in improvement" and face increasingly negative consequences that may range from a cut in funding to providing students transportation to other schools to state take-over of the school to replacing all instructional staff. The attention to subgroups is one of the premises behind NCLB. However, as Kim and Saunderman (2005) suggest, many students fit into more than one subgroup, for example, into both a minority and the high-poverty subgroups. This increases the number of subgroups in the school, and increases the school's likelihood of failing to meet AYP.

Although the premise behind NCLB is positive, the implementation has raised many concerns. Each state selects its own standardized measure of achievement and the tests differ from state to state. Ho (2008) suggests that comparing scores between states in especially problematic because the cut score, that is the score required to achieve a proficient rating, is set by the makers of each test and differs from state to state. Because all students in all states are required to be proficient, but the definition of "proficient" is different in each state, a clear picture of nation-wide student proficiency is not clear.

In a comparison of six states, Ho (2008) found that the levels of improvement from year to year were the same, but a difference in cut scores led to different reported levels of proficiency. Tymms (2004) argues that scores have remained static since 2000 and that the change in cut scores has shown an improvement that does not, in reality, exist. Kim and Saunderman (2005) found that in one state, both the low poverty and the high poverty schools increased in proficiency between 1998 and 2003. However, they also found that the number of schools not meeting AYP increased. Using mean proficiency to determine AYP had the most negative consequences for minority and low income schools. This is despite the fact that high poverty schools' achievement scores have been improving at a rate equal to those of the more affluent schools. Kim and Saunderman (2005) suggest that this demonstrates a bias against high poverty schools, and suggest that more than one measure of proficiency should be used. They go on to suggest that test scores are inaccurate indicators of proficiency and that the difference in students' test scores often reflects a difference in skills before entering school. Kim and Saunderman (2005) suggest that a measurement of students' improvement over time is a better measure than mean scores.

In my state, the cut score changes from year to year. Exactly what the cut score is each year is not announced until after the tests have all been scored and the scores are released to the schools and to the public. This secrecy makes it impossible for schools to predict how students will score on the test from year to year, or exactly how much improvement is needed. Tymms (2004) suggests that the procedures for setting cut scores has an important impact on published results and therefore an independent body should evaluate test data. Others have raised questions over whether the tests themselves are accurate measures of reading ability. Allington (2006) found that most reading tests evaluate basic reading achievement rather than higher-order literacy skills. These higher-order skills are the skills that are necessary for synthesis and taking part in discourse about texts.

The emphasis on test scores has affected classroom practice. Because schools are under tremendous pressure to raise test scores, 'bubble kids' are identified. These 'bubble kids' are the students who are just below the proficiency cut score (Ho, 2008). It is generally accepted that focusing on the 'bubble kids', and increasing their instruction will push them over the edge of proficiency and cause these students (and the school) to pass the state assessment. One problem with this focus on the 'bubble' students is that the type of additional instruction the students receive is often prescriptive 'skill and drill' rather than quality instruction, as I saw in my own school.

Ho (2008) also points out that focusing on the achievement of the 'bubble' students does not improve the achievement of the lowest performing students. Likewise, I have found this focus to have a negative impact on the higher level and gifted students as well. I heard one administrator articulate this by saying that the gifted students in the

school did not necessarily need the good teachers in the building, because they would do just fine on the standardized test regardless of the type of instruction they received. As a result of this thinking, the gifted students were assigned to a less proficient teacher in the school and were not challenged. In another school, the administrator explained that he was taking the 'bubble' students out of their art and music classes so they could receive extra instruction in literacy and math which were on the standardized test. As a result, these students' total education suffered. These anecdotes illustrate the point made by Harlen and Deakin Crick (2002, p. 8) who suggest that we must "quantify the 'cost' of current practice, including teaching time taken up with testing and practice testing". They found that lower achieving students "were more likely… to minimize effort and respond to tests randomly or by guessing" (Ibid, p. 5). Yet these are the very students whose scores must improve in order for the school to meet AYP. Although all schools must worry to some extent about their test scores, high poverty schools, especially, are concerned. As a result, they administer benchmark assessments throughout the year which leads to a significant loss of instructional time or to prescriptive instruction that does little to increase achievement (Deakin Crick, 2002; Cummings, 2007).

Aside from its impact on instruction in general, No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) has had negative effects on reading instruction specifically. Reading First is a reading initiative that is part of NCLB. Schools can apply to be Reading First schools and receive additional funding by proving that they are using 'scientifically proven' reading instruction. Unlike NCLB, in which "testing mandates were largely based on an empirically unsupported belief that extensive testing can improve achievement, Reading First focused on *pedagogy*, claiming that the instructional

mandates it imposed for the low income students were scientifically proven" (Cummings, 2007, p. 566).

Although the National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000) found that phonics instruction was only one aspect of reading instruction and did not improve comprehension after first grade, the Reading First initiative promotes a standardized, scripted, whole-class approach to phonics instruction (Cummings, 2007). The initiative was designed specifically to give additional funding to low income schools. Reading First did not give funding to schools that applied for it using a balanced literacy approach, even if the approach included phonics instruction, suggesting that balanced literacy programmes were not scientifically supported. However, as I argue in this thesis, a balanced approach to reading instruction is the best method for reaching the needs of all students.

Because many of the low income schools are desperate for funding, some have agreed to the Reading First initiatives. These schools have had a noticeable pedagogical change (Cummings, 2007). Students in these schools are less likely to read extensively in school since NCLB has been passed and therefore, Cummings (2007) suggests, that the schools using Reading First have seen little gain in student reading scores and that the students have received little real benefit from the initiative.

National Literacy Strategy

England has also faced government involvement in reading instruction. The National Literacy Strategy (Department for Education, 1997) was introduced in 1998 to help improve the literacy instruction in British schools. Earl *et al*, (2000, p. 7) explain that

> *although there is little consensus about the source of the inadequacies in today's schools, many would agree that the education system...[is] not producing citizens who can contribute to and benefit from a world of increased opportunity and complexity*.

Because of these perceived inadequacies, the National Literacy Strategy (Department for Education, 1997) was implemented. According to NLS, all students were to be fluent and independent readers, confident writers, and effective speakers and listeners by the end of Year 9, around age 14 (Earl *et al*, 2000, p. 27). The goals of the National Literacy Strategy to improve literacy learning cannot be opposed, explain Goodwyn and Findlay (2003), just as any initiative to improve literacy cannot be opposed because of the importance of literacy. According to Earl *et al*, (2000), the National Literacy Strategy was among the most ambitious national educational reform in the world. They go on to explain that the NLS was also the most explicit. The National Literacy Strategy was a top down approach to reform that makes teachers responsible for implementing the National Standards (Key Stage 3, 2001; Goodwyn and Findlay, 2003). Goodwyn and Findlay (2003) also found that the NLS has led to increased dialogue between primary and secondary teachers.

The most prevalent criticism of the National Literacy Strategy was that it was too rigid and prescriptive (Earl *et al*, 2000; Fisher, 2000; Rose, 2009), specifically in the Literacy Hour which included a prescribed three part lesson (Fisher, 2000) and the Literacy Progress Units which were designed to help low achieving students catch up quickly and were not necessarily taught by a teacher (Department for Education and Employment, 2001; Department for Education and Skills, 2002a, 2002b). Whereas

standards and curriculum define *what* should be taught, Fisher (2000) argues that the NLS defines *how* children should be taught.

Goodwyn and Findlay (2003) suggest that the biggest challenge of the strategy was its implementation. The NLS model seemed to expect students to fully understand and independently use a concept or strategy shortly after learning it, and Fisher (2000) points out that policy makers wanted evidence of progress immediately. But, Fisher (2000, p. 59) adds, "short term literacy gains may not lead to the long term goal of an adult population that is literate". Looking for short term goals, she believes, has led to emergent literacy practices that are not developmentally appropriate. The National Literacy Strategy, claims Fisher (2000) prohibits the teacher from developing instruction for the students in his or her class. Goodwyn and Findlay (2003) point out that a weakness of the Strategy is that it focuses too much on school literacies and neglects 'real world' literacies, including literacy related to technology.

In his final review, Rose (2009) recommended that the prescriptive nature of the instruction and overloaded curriculum should be reduced. He recommended allowing schools and teachers to meet the individual needs of students rather than strictly following the Literacy Hour. However, the Rose Review (2009) did recommend that phonics instruction should continue in primary schools and that the Simple View of Reading led to effective practices. (2009). The Simple View of Reading, Gough and Tunmer (1986) suggest, is an equation in which Reading is the product of decoding and linguistic comprehension (R=DxC). Høien-Tengesdal (2010) however, argues that this mathematical quantification of reading ability does not account for vocabulary knowledge, which is associated with reading comprehension or listening comprehension

which she found to be "the most powerful predictor of reading comprehension" (p. 461). She also points out that the Simple View of Reading measures the decoding of non-words and that phonemic awareness alone does not explain the variance in students' reading comprehension.

While the National Literacy Strategy (Department for Education, 1997) may have included all five pillars of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) recommended by the National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000) over time, it seems doubtful that they were taught to all students daily at the primary level because of the highly structured nature of the Literacy Hour. Rose's recommendation to make the teaching of literacy less rigid and more in line with the developmental needs of the students therefore seems appropriate.

National funding for the National Literacy Strategy ended at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. What is not yet clear is to what extent the schools and Local Authorities (LA) will revise the strategies and keep some portion of them or do away with them entirely. How the recommendations of Rose (2009) will be used in the future is also unclear.

National Literacy Strategy and My Development

Learning about the National Literacy Strategy gave me a growing awareness of the negative effects well-intentioned government initiatives can have on education. The NLS was intended to improve literacy education in England. However, because it was developed as a top-down government programme and primarily delivered a 'one size fits all' method of instruction, it did not take into account the individual abilities and needs of students. Top-down approaches lead to a loss of control and agency for teachers (Black,

2008). As a result of becoming aware of the Strategy, I have taken a more decisive view of the role of government in education. NCLB, unlike the NLS, does not currently discuss *how* material is to be taught and leaves *what* material should be taught up to the individual states. While the Reading First initiative does emphasize phonics instruction, it is currently not required at most U.S. schools. Although NCLB has not brought about the educational reform intended and has led to extensive standardized testing, it has brought to light the discrepancies in education available to students in high poverty schools. Comparing the two educational reforms has led me to believe more firmly that teachers and teacher researchers have more power to effect real change in schools and classrooms than government mandates, and that allowing the government too much control of schools can lead to practices that may have a negative effect on student learning.

Effects on Teachers and Schools

School –Wide Initiatives

In England, the National Literacy Strategy focused on literacy as a top priority in schools and classrooms (Earl *et al,* 2003). The same is true in the United States as a result of No Child Left Behind. Deshler and Kennedy (2009) suggest that there needs to be a school-wide effort focused on improving literacy. Everyone on the staff, they continue, should work to meet shared school literacy goals. Phelps (2005, p. 25), however, found that "'top down' dictums regarding curriculum are unlikely to result in much positive change. Rather staff developers and others need to understand the constraints and beliefs of teachers." So, school staff must work together to determine what the literacy goals are for their students and how each teacher will work toward the

goals. For this to be effective, it requires commitment from the staff, but also a leader, either a teacher or a principal, who is willing to spearhead the effort. Developing 'distributed leadership' depends on "encouraging participation at all levels" (Fielding *et al*, 2005, p. 43).

Elements of school-wide reform that must be considered, according to Deshler and Kennedy (2009) include a focus on quality instruction, a common language between staff for discussing and analysing instruction, and coaching for teachers. They suggest that these three elements lead to an improved quality of instruction and student achievement. Earl *et al*, (2003) agree that "ultimately, changes in schools happen because of the motivation and capacity of individual teachers teaching children in classrooms" (p. 138). Fielding *et al*, (2005, p. 41) add that a "commitment to and consistently stressing mutual professional learning as a priority [is] essential" to improving practice.

Strong professional development and an expectation of implementation can support school-wide change in literacy practices. Slavin (2009) explains that schools must invest in their teachers for improvement in reading instruction to occur. Professional development can lead to the creation of a common language and provide instructional strategies that teachers can implement. Burroughs-Lange (2009) also found that effective professional development could bring about a lasting change in literacy instruction. Slavin *et al*, (2009) add that professional development should include strategies that are effective for all students, and that strong professional development is more effective than changing the curriculum or implementing interventions that do not

change classroom instruction. Fielding *et al*, (2005) suggest that the culture of a school must be changed in order to motivate teachers to work together professionally.

In my own teaching experience, it has been the professional development offered by my school and community that have been the catalyst for positive change and an improvement in my own literacy instruction. Center (2009) suggests that most teachers agree that their pre-service teacher training has not equipped them to teach struggling readers effectively. This was certainly the case for me, in spite of an overall strong pre-service teaching programme. If not for the professional development I had the opportunity to participate in, my classroom teaching and literacy instruction would be much weaker.

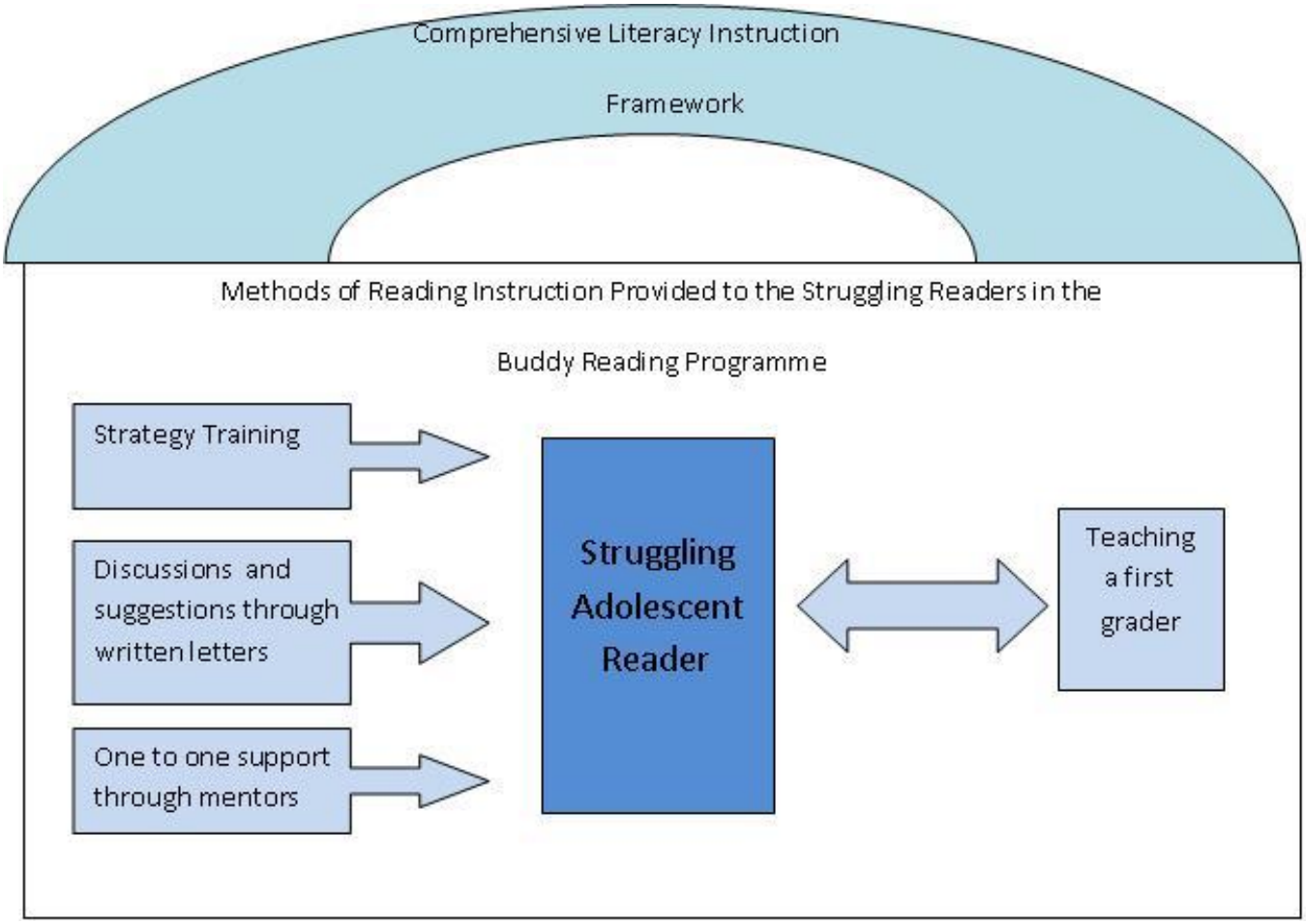
I once believed that professional development alone would be a catalyst for improved literacy instruction. In recent years, as I have spent more time in other teachers' classrooms, I have found that this is not always the case. Even when they have had access to professional development, some teachers do not synthesize the information and use it to inform or guide their instruction, or to make more than a few small changes to their instruction. Hoover and Fabian (2000) suggest that successful schools include a principal who understands the curriculum and philosophy of the school, and one who emphasizes meaningful classroom instruction. As teachers and administrators work together to set goals for the school the teachers will likely be more willing to implement them. However, once the goals are set, the administrator must take on a role in setting the expectation that the goals are implemented school-wide. Building confidence in staff [is] … vital in mobilizing that commitment and in creating a desire for and openness to change" (Fielding *et al*, 2005, p. 41).

Tatum (2005, p. 135) explains that "there are exceptional teachers in all schools, but being exceptional is not enough to effect school wide change... schools need ordinary teachers doing exceptional things". Through professional development and the development of school wide literacy goals, it is possible to change the direction of a school and create a positive and meaningful literacy experience for each student. In my own situation as a classroom teacher, I am not in a position in which I can easily call upon other teachers to develop and implement a school-wide initiative. However, as an individual teacher I can do something exceptional to promote an improvement in literacy in my school. My goal of improving the literacy of the students in my school and filling a gap in literacy instruction led me to engage in teacher research.

The Buddy Reading Programme

My strong belief in grass-roots initiatives for educational change led me to develop the Buddy Reading Programme, which is the subject of this study. The programme is a two-tiered approach in which struggling readers learned reading strategies by teaching a first grade reader and grew in their own reading skills through one to one support from a volunteer mentor. Figure 1 below illustrates the variety of ways that the middle school students in the programme were receiving literacy instruction. A description of the specific elements of instruction included in the programme will be discussed later.

Figure 1: Literacy Instruction within the Buddy Reading Programme



The research on buddy reading programmes provides much evidence that supports Rubinstein-Avila's (2003, p. 83) conclusion that "the general consensus among literacy researchers who have studied peer reading is that it can play an important role in bridging the gap between a student's total reliance on a teacher and complete self-reliance". Research (eg. Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Rubenstein-Avila, 2003; Wright and Cleary, 2006) supports improvement in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, reading comprehension, fluency, attitude towards reading, self-efficacy, and cooperative learning for students who take on either a tutor or tutee role. However, little research is available on the benefits of a buddy reading programme focused on general education middle school students who are not receiving any special services outside the regular school curriculum, and no research is currently available on the effects of a two-tiered buddy reading programme in which the middle school student both serves as a mentor and is mentored by an adult. This area of research is the basis for my study and led to the development of my research questions:

This Study

Research Questions

1. To what extent and how can a Buddy Reading Programme help struggling readers to improve their reading?
2. What is the relationship between motivation, attitude, and improvement in reading?
3. How does working with a younger student affect an older student's attitude and motivation toward reading?

4. How does practising and reading aloud children's books affect the fluency of a struggling reader in middle school?
5. How do recorded books and current technology benefit the reading skills and motivation of struggling middle school readers in one community?

These questions will be addressed through this study. Because effective comprehensive balanced literacy instruction leads to 'real reading' and the Buddy Reading Programme included these elements of instruction, I hypothesize that the Buddy Reading Programme will improve the reading of the students involved in the study; and this study seeks to find out exactly how and why this might be.

Participants

The study began with sixteen participants in seventh and eighth grades in one school who were recommended for the programme by their English/ language arts teachers. One student dropped out of the programme part way through, leaving fifteen students who completed the programme. The students in the programme were both from my English class and from the classes of three other English teachers. All of the students were identified by the teachers as being below grade level in reading skills during the first six weeks of school. All of the students were general education students, meaning they did not receive special education or gifted and talented services, and none of the students had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Eight of the students were African American and seven were white; English was the first language for all of the participants. Three boys and twelve girls participated in the programme. It is unknown whether any of the students received free or reduced price lunch, as this information is kept confidential.

All students were provided with information on the programme and they and their parents signed informed consent release statements.

The first graders in the programme were all in one classroom taught by the cooperating teacher for this programme. These students, while participating in the Buddy Reading Programme, were not a focus of the research study. The adults who served as mentors for the Buddy Reading Programme were volunteers from the community, parents or members of the school's Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), or retired teachers.

Research Site

This research study took place in my classroom. The school day is comprised of eight 44 minute class periods. All teachers have one planning period without students in the classroom and one enrichment/ study hall eighth period. During the year of my research study, I had two planning periods back to back in order to facilitate the Buddy Reading Programme.

I use a reading and writing workshop model (Atwell, 1998; Robb, 2000) for my English and language arts classes, so the classroom space was already set up in a way that was conducive to the Buddy Reading Programme. My classroom is large and includes tables and chairs for 28 students. There are three large bookshelves. Two shelves contain my classroom library of adolescent literature. The third bookshelf is on the other side of the classroom and contains children's books for the Buddy Reading Programme. Most of these books were purchased using grant money. In the back corner of the room is a rug that is a coloured map of the United States. This is the class meeting area. Each Buddy Reading session began in the meeting area with me reading a book aloud to the students. Throughout the classroom are pillows, beanbags, couches, and comfy chairs.

When the middle school and elementary students met together, they found a place where they could work away from other pairs. Because my classroom already included many comfortable places for students to meet, it was an appropriate setting for the Buddy Reading Programme. I made few changes to my classroom to incorporate this new programme. When the middle school students met with their adult mentors, they began by coming to my classroom to pick up supplies. Then they moved to areas around the school where they could meet with little interruption.

Because the Buddy Reading Programme included the elements of comprehensive balanced literacy instruction, it helped to fill a gap in literacy instruction of the participating students that was not always met within their regular classroom instruction. The research included in the literature review informed my planning and implementing of the programme and led directly to the different forms of balanced literacy instruction I used within it. I therefore analyse how the specific reading skill is enhanced in the Buddy Reading Programme.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Defining Reading

When talking with students and teachers, I have heard reading defined in simple terms, such as 'reading is thinking' and 'reading is a synthesis of background knowledge and text.' These definitions are adequate, as far as they go, but do not delve deep enough into the problem of defining 'real reading' or into the specific elements that struggling readers face. In an attempt to clarify these issues, I first define reading and explain the five pillars of reading instruction. I then discuss proficient and struggling readers and illustrate the differences between them, as well as the specific characteristics that are unique to adolescent readers. Third, I look at effective literacy instruction and how it leads to the development of real readers. Next, I discuss a variety of interventions that have been researched in order to aid struggling readers, including several buddy reading programmes that informed me as I developed an intervention for my own school. Finally, I discuss the Buddy Reading Programme developed for this study and informed by the literature and explain how it fits into the model of a comprehensive balanced approach to literacy instruction which develops real readers.

In 2000, The National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000) in the United States released a report reviewing 100,000 research-based studies on reading. Although the final report has been controversial, mainly because of its exclusion of independent silent reading, it is also widely accepted and has been widely cited in studies published since 2000.

The Reading Wars

One result of the National Reading Panel report is that it helped bring an end to 'The Reading Wars' in the United States. This war between phonics and 'whole language' immersion in authentic texts, was devastating (Hoover and Fabian, 2000). A 2007 U.S. newspaper headline declared the "End of the Reading Wars: Phonics vs. Whole-Word Battle Gives Way to What's Best for Child" (Smydo, 2007). The battle still raging in the United Kingdom, however, phonics instruction is currently a 'hot' or widely discussed topic (Cassidy and Wenrich, 1999; Cassidy and Cassidy, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010; Cassidy *et al*, 2006; Cassidy *et al*, 2010). As demonstrated by the National Reading Panel's (NICHHD, 2000) report, in the last forty years there have been a myriad of research studies on reading instruction, reading development, and the best methods of teaching reading. Real literacy requires a combination of decoding, comprehension, and an appreciation of texts (Hoover and Fabian, 2000). Today, most experts (eg. Pressley *et al*, 1996; Perkins and Cooter, 2005; Phelps, 2005; Biancarosa and Snow, 2006) agree that students learn to read in different ways; therefore, a combination of phonics and whole language should be included in classroom instruction and in interventions to best reach the needs of all students (Smydo, 2007). According to Dr. Cathy Roller, director of research and policy for the International Reading Association, the reading wars are "a dead issue" (Smydo, 2007). The National Reading Panel's report, in part, helped end the war.

Another result of the National Reading Panel report is the acceptance of what has come to be known as The Five Pillars of Reading. These Pillars: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, are accepted as the elements necessary

for ‘real reading’ to occur, and lead to a comprehensive balanced approach to reading instruction.

Although literacy development begins at a very early age, this study will focus mainly on the pillars of fluency and comprehension, which are essential elements of literacy for adolescents. Phonemic awareness and phonics are most important early in a child’s literacy learning, and to a certain extent for struggling readers. Vocabulary, while an essential element of reading, varies with the age of the reader and the reading task, and therefore will not be addressed as fully within this study. However, sight vocabulary and its link to automaticity in reading will be discussed. Because students learn at different rates and with different levels of support, the cognitive development of students will also be discussed.

Cognitive Development

Vygotsky (1986) suggested that concepts, such as word meaning or reading, are not spontaneously understood, but rather developed over time, and that an accumulation of knowledge and systematic learning leads to a child’s development. He goes on to explain that these concepts are complex acts of thought that cannot be taught through drilling, but are developed through attention, memory, abstract thought, and comparison. Trying to directly teach a concept, he argues, leads to a parrot-like retelling, but not an understanding of it (Vygotsky, 1986). He explains, “instruction precedes development” (p. 184) and “therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it” (Ibid, p. 188). Learning to read is a conscious activity that requires concentration and effort. It is only when a reader becomes proficient that reading can become a more spontaneous or automatic action. For struggling readers,

reading has never become automatic, so they go through the motions of reading without really understanding it. "Development and instruction have different 'rhythms','' and "the turning points at which a general principle becomes clear to a child cannot be set in advance by the curriculum" (Ibid, p. 185). The reading development of struggling adolescent readers did not occur at the same time as most of their peers, and therefore they were left behind when instruction moved ahead. Vygotsky (1986, p. 187), however claims that "with assistance, every child can do more than he can by himself" which corresponds with Palincsar and Brown's (1984) idea of reciprocal teaching in which a student learns a concept through teaching it. The "discrepancy between a child's actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance indicates the zone of his proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 187). A goal of the Buddy Reading Programme was to instruct students in reading within their zone of proximal development (ZPD) and then lead them to reciprocally teach others. Vygotsky (1986) suggests that each child has a "sensitive period" when he or she is particularly responsive to a certain type of instruction. The Buddy Reading Programme sought to rediscover the sensitive periods of reading instruction for the middle school students and help increase their reading development and understanding of reading as a concept.

The Five Pillars of Reading

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize sounds within words (NRP, NICHHD, 2000). For example, "bus", "base", and "bean" all have the same beginning sound. Phonics is the recognition of letter-sound correspondence and using this to spell words (Ibid, p. 2-89). For example, the word "cat" is composed of the sounds, or

phonemes, /c/, /a/, /t/. The correlation between an understanding of phonics and the ability to read is strong, and continues to be a major focus of reading instruction in the United Kingdom. According to the research on Key Stage 3 of the National Literacy Strategy, phonics "is of central importance in pupils' acquisition of literacy skills" (Department for Education and Employment, 2001, p. vii). In 1998, a Phono-Graphix instructional method was implemented in the United Kingdom which included teaching students the skills of blending, segmenting, and manipulating phonemes, and teaching sound to symbol correspondence (Brooks, 2002). Brooks' (2002) report found that the Phono-Graphix programme led to the greatest reading gain of all the programmes he reviewed. Numerous other studies support phonics instruction: According to a review of 96 studies in English-speaking countries, Slavin *et al*, (2009) found that emphasizing phonics instruction improved student learning outcomes and that phonics instruction was an important element in successful reading interventions for struggling readers. A 2009 survey of literacy leaders in the United Kingdom suggests that "literacy has continued to be associated with phonics" (National Literacy Trust, 2009, p. 1). Oakhill *et al*, (2003) and Stainthorp and Hughes (2004) agree that phonological awareness is essential to good decoding. Without an understanding of letter to sound correspondence, one cannot decode words accurately. Stainthorp and Hughes (2004, p. 364) found a strong relationship between early phonological awareness and "reading performance at the end of the primary years". The debate over phonics comes when we address the value of phonics instruction in isolation and the value of phonics instruction to older students. We must ask the question, is phonics instruction, in and of itself, reading? And do all students need phonics instruction throughout their educational careers?

Researchers agree that phonics alone is not enough, and while phonics instruction should be a part of reading instruction, especially in the primary grades, it should not be the sole method of reading instruction (Brooks, 2002; Torgenson *et al*, 2006; Slavin, 2009). Slavin *et al*, (2009) found phonics instruction to be most effective for six and seven year old students and recommended that it be continued to some extent through the upper elementary school years as a part of literacy instruction. However, Fisher and Ivey (2006, p. 182) argue that "there is little reason to believe that emphasizing these fundamental skills [phonemic awareness and phonics] would have any significant benefit for secondary students" as it is widely believed that these skills are well grasped by students in higher grades. Thomas and Wexler (2007), however, argue that basic word recognition and word analysis skills should be taught to struggling readers of any age, and Allen (2000) suggests using predictable texts with common language patterns to aid struggling adolescent readers. In their study of upper elementary and middle school students, Hoover and Fabian (2000) selected texts with repeated patterns, sight words, and common phonetic or linguistic patterns. According to Rasinski (2003), a *limited* amount of practice of high frequency words in isolation, such as using flash cards, may be beneficial to elementary students, but he adds the caveat that the words should also be read in context. A strong understanding of phonics allows students to decode the words they encounter in a text. For a proficient reader, basic sight words are decoded automatically and with little effort. A proficient reader can typically decode more difficult words with a limited amount of effort. This research suggests that although phonics instruction in general is not helpful for secondary students, it may be beneficial for struggling readers.

It is not likely that middle school aged students would be willing to practise flash cards of high frequency words on their own, although they are willing to help their buddies with flash cards of these words occasionally as part of the Buddy Reading Programme. Palincsar and Brown (1984) suggest that when a student teaches another, his own learning increases; this reciprocal teaching was an essential element of the Buddy Reading Programme. As the students worked together on the flash cards, the middle school students, through reciprocal teaching, learned basic sight words that may not have been mastered previously. Once the sight words were mastered by the first graders, the flash cards were no longer used. At that point, the middle school students worked on words that their buddies struggled with in the context of texts they were reading.

But phonics instruction alone is not sufficient even for struggling readers and while it may be effective for some, it should not be the only type of intervention. According to Biancarosa and Snow (2006) there are 8 million struggling readers in grades 4-12 in the United States, and these students have many different types of reading difficulties. In 1984, Palincsar and Brown recognized that many struggling readers were taught decoding skills more often than they were taught comprehension skills, and Oakhill *et al,* (2003) agree that decoding is important to reading, but is not enough. Stanovich (1986, p. 373), however, argues that "comprehension fails not because of over-reliance on decoding, but because decoding skills are not developed enough". Constantinidou and Stainthorp (2008) agree that students who struggle to decode fluently have difficulty in comprehending. Decoding with automaticity leads to fluent reading, which leads to comprehension, therefore students who struggle to decode are less likely

to comprehend texts because they do not have enough memory to recall the text after decoding the individual words (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997; Brownell and Walther-Thomas, 2000; Oakhill *et al,* 2003; Reis *et al,* 2008). Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) add that struggling readers also lack adequate practice and accessible texts, which delays their development of automaticity and ultimately negatively affects their attention to higher-level thinking skills. Therefore, some instruction in decoding skills may be beneficial for older students in order to lead them toward comprehension.

Nagy *et al,* (2006) found that students who were trained to chunk morphemes, the small meaningful parts of words including prefixes, suffixes, and roots, had increased reading skills over students who were taught only phonics; and that an understanding of morphemes was found to be useful to older students who were decoding unknown words. This may be because the morphemes represent a meaning, rather than an individual sound. After teaching this skill to their buddies, my goal was that it would transfer to the older student's repertoire of decoding strategies and help improve their sight vocabulary.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge is a good predictor of comprehension, and reading has a positive effect on vocabulary development (Reutzel and Hollingsworth, 1988; Baumann *et al,* 2003; Stainthorp and Hughes, 2004; Pearson *et al,* 2007; Palincsar, 2009). Although Pearson *et al,* (2007) mention that vocabulary was largely ignored in the literature of the 1990s and early twenty-first century, there is a great deal being said today on vocabulary instruction as it certainly is an important aspect of reading and of comprehension. However, vocabulary acquisition was not a focus of the Buddy Reading Programme. Here I will address only the elements of vocabulary that did directly impact

the students in the programme: sight vocabulary and the role of vocabulary as a link to inference.

Sight Vocabulary

Ehri (1999) defines sight vocabulary as being able to access single words automatically from memory. When their reading is not fluent, students are trying to integrate several different skills (Clay, 1991). As I have listened to students read aloud, I have learned that those students who read slowly or pause frequently to decode words are not as likely to comprehend. Gardner (2004) suggests that "high frequency words must be mastered in order to achieve minimum levels of reading proficiency" (p. 5). Ehri (1999) calls this mastery of high frequency words sight reading, and explains that it is the *process* of reading automatically. She goes on to explain that proficient readers use sight word reading, which is why their reading sounds more fluent than struggling readers' reading. Reading with automaticity allows comprehension to occur (Ehri, 1999).

Well before students reach middle school, they should be sight word reading. And even many older struggling readers have developed this skill. However, sight word reading is somewhat less consistent in struggling readers than in proficient readers. This may account for why so many struggling readers read texts word by word, rather than fluently, and then are less likely to be able to retell what they have read. Their attention to decoding and their underdeveloped understanding of sight vocabulary demands that less attention is available for comprehending. This may also account for why struggling readers do not consistently comprehend text they have read silently, especially in content area classrooms where many of the words in the texts are not part of their sight vocabularies.

Ehri (1999, 2005) suggests that there are four phases of sight word reading: pre-alphabetic, partial alphabetic, full alphabetic, and consolidated alphabetic. As students learn to read, they work their way through each of these phases at different levels of development. It is essential that students progress to the consolidated alphabetic phase in order to attain proficient levels of sight vocabulary and sight reading and then to progress to comprehension. Ehri (1999, p. 102) suggests that the phase theory of word reading suggests "that the attainment of mature word reading skills is possible only if pupils acquire working knowledge of the alphabetic system". Understanding the four phases aids teachers in understanding their students' word reading behaviours and aided me as I assessed students' reading in the Buddy Reading Programme. While students typically are proficient in the consolidated alphabetic phase by second grade, the time it takes to reach this level varies by student. For struggling readers, this phase may not be completely developed.

In the first phase, the pre-alphabetic phase, children do not yet understand the idea of letters and sounds. They may be able to identify some words, but the words are linked to visual cues and meanings, rather than letters and sounds (Ehri, 2005). At this phase, children recognize and identify brand names and restaurants through the visual cues. This is the phase my two year old nephew was operating at when he asked to go to McDonald's, recognizing the golden arches as we drove past. This concept also allowed him to recognize the red and white script on a can of Coca-Cola or the blocky blue and white Oreo package. When he saw these items, he could ask for them by name through recognition of the visual cues on the packaging and linking that to the meaning of the snacks, rather than by reading the words.

In some primary classrooms, teachers capitalize on this recognition at the pre-alphabetic phase by using environmental print within the classroom. Labels from items students recognize, such as McDonald's or Cheerios are posted in the classroom to aid students. Ehri (2005) however, recommends that using the names of the students in the classroom is a better instructional method at the pre-alphabetic phase than environmental print because names rely on letters only and not on other visual cues. I would suggest that a combination of these two instructional choices could most aid students. A word wall combining the environmental print students recognize with names and new words they are learning could best support the transition from the pre-alphabetic to the partial alphabetic phase. For example, a poster with the familiar golden arches could be paired with the names of students in the classroom, such as 'Michael' and 'Maggie', and with other common words such as 'mom'. Like 'McDonald's', all of these words begin with the /m/ sound. This takes what students already know and combines it with new learning within the child's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1987).

The alphabetic principle suggests that letters correspond to phonemes (Ehri, 1999). Teaching phonemes by connecting them to letters should be a part of instruction in both reading and writing (Ehri and Roberts, 2006). At this point, children can begin to name letters and read words using phonetic cues (Ehri, 2005). The ability to read sight words occurs by remembering how these letter to phoneme correspondences work (Ehri, 1999). This is the beginning of the partial alphabetic stage when children begin to use phonetics to decode words, although the decoding is not yet fluent (Ehri, 2005).

There are three stages in students' learning to read words: decoding, analogy, and prediction (Ehri, 1999; Ehri and Roberts, 2006). The decoding or word attack phase is a

sounding out and blending of phonemes in order to read a word. The second stage is reading by analogy. In this stage, students use known words to read unknown words (Ehri, 1999). For example, if a child already knows the word 'cat', the spelling pattern, or rime, can be used to spell 'bat', 'sat', 'fat', and so on. Using the rime is a fairly simple method of analogy. In the Buddy Reading Programme, I taught the middle school students to use the analogy method to help their first grade buddies learn new words. The children manipulated magnetic letters in order to practise making words using analogy. Although using the rime is probably the simplest form of analogy making (Ehri, 1999), other parts of a word can also be used. For example, if a child is trying to write the word 'grapes', the beginning of a classmate's name, 'Grace' can be helpful because the beginning phonemes are the same.

The third stage in learning to read words is prediction (Ehri, 1999; Ehri and Roberts, 2006). At this stage, children use the preceding text or a few letters in a word to predict what the word is (Ehri, 1999). Illustrations may also help the child make word predictions. If a child is reading a text about a trip to the zoo, and there is a picture of an elephant on the page, the child can predict that the word beginning 'el' is likely 'elephant'. Ehri (2005, p. 137) suggests that this occurs because "when readers encounter a new written word and recognize its pronunciation and meaning, they use their alphabetic knowledge to compute connections between graphemes and phonemes". This does not mean the child will necessarily recognize the word 'elephant' the next time he or she sees it, especially if it is encountered outside of context. Children need multiple encounters with new words in order to learn them (Beck *et al*, 1983). However, it does indicate that the child is learning to identify words through a combination of strategies.

The child at this phase is learning to understand word patterns, which aids him or her in sight word reading (Ehri, 1999). Phonics instruction is valuable at this stage, and helps the child make the transition from the partial alphabetic stage to the full alphabetic phase.

At the full alphabetic phase, sight word reading occurs automatically, rather than strategically through decoding (Ehri, 1999, 2005). Children have developed a memory of sight words (2005) and can distinguish between words with similar spellings (1999). The "full alphabetic phase emerges when beginners acquire decoding skills and graphophonemic knowledge that is used to bind spellings fully to their pronunciations in memory" (Ehri, 2005, p. 146) Sight word learning is very rapid at this stage (2005).

At the consolidated alphabetic phase, students recognize the morpheme blends that are used in many words (Ehri, 2005). Baumann *et al*, (2003) suggest that students use both morphemes and context clues to work out new words. Using mainly morphemes to remember words at the consolidated alphabetic phase "contributes to the learning of sight words by reducing the memory load (Ehri, 2005, p. 150). Proficient readers, who have reached the consolidated alphabetic phase, do not read every letter of a word to determine how the word is pronounced and what it means. Instead, when they encounter a word they can typically recognize the word and know its meaning automatically. Similarly, when they encounter a new word, they are unlikely to sound the word out letter by letter. Instead, proficient readers break the word into meaningful chunks, or morphemes to determine what the word is. Often, after determining the pronunciation, they find that the word is already in their verbal vocabulary, or what Pearson *et al,* (2007) call the receptive vocabulary – words that are understood when listening. After seeing it in context and determining the pronunciation, it has become part

of their sight vocabulary as well. This leads to what Pearson *et al,* (2007) call productive vocabulary – the words a person uses in their own speaking and writing.

Moving through the phases of sight vocabulary is essential to proficient, fluent reading. Students who do not fully develop each phase from pre-alphabetic to consolidated alphabetic are likely to struggle to decode words automatically. For many of the middle school students in the Buddy Reading Program, their sight vocabularies were not fully developed. In order to read a text, they had to stop to decode words frequently, which disrupted the flow of the reading and led to a lack of comprehension. Interestingly, Ehri (2005) suggests that students should reach the consolidated alphabetic phase, in which they easily read words, during second grade, or around age eight. Rose (2009, p. 56), however, suggests that students make the transition "from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' by age 7". While I agree that students may read nonfiction texts and learn from their reading as early as first or second grade, I would argue that the process of learning to read continues throughout life as reading tasks change, and that a real reader never really fully makes this transition. As reading tasks change and become more difficult, the reader must learn to adjust to the reading task and approach the texts differently. I would also argue that students can learn from their reading even when learning to read simple texts. However, moving through the phases of sight vocabulary is essential to 'real reading'.

Vocabulary and Secondary Students

How does vocabulary relate to older students' reading and ability to comprehend? It has been widely suggested that reading increases a student's vocabulary knowledge. Cunningham and Stanovich (1991, p. 271) suggest that "even the child with limited

reading skills will build vocabulary and knowledge structures through reading". They claim that print exposure is a predictor of word and vocabulary knowledge. Deshler and Kennedy (2009, p. 10) agree that "the more time students are exposed to the printed word, the more their vocabulary and background knowledge grows, and the more proficient they become as readers". Gardner (2004), however, argues that simply reading widely is not enough to increase vocabulary, but rather that the type of material read affects vocabulary growth. She claims that expository texts contain more specialized vocabulary than narrative texts and do more to promote vocabulary growth. Pearson *et al*, (2007) agree that informational texts typically have more difficult vocabulary than literary texts. This is a major challenge for middle school students who are reading more textbooks, and typically reading them on their own with little background knowledge of the vocabulary presented. This problem is compounded for struggling readers who also lack many of the word attack skills that more proficient readers have for figuring out difficult vocabulary. However, what Gardner (2004) and Pearson *et al*, (2007) do not acknowledge is that students who have been exposed to more print simply know more words and are likely to have stronger word attack skills than those students who have not read much, regardless of whether the texts were expository or narrative.

Vocabulary and Inference

Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1988) found that training students to find difficult vocabulary within a text and infer the meanings was an effective technique. Students combined the text, their background knowledge, and unknown words to determine word meanings and the importance of the words to the text. They found that effective

vocabulary instruction improved students' inferencing abilities and led to increased comprehension.

Pressley *et al*, (1987) suggests several strategies for inferring word meaning. A student may use external inferencing, that is, clues outside of the word itself such as attention to the word's location in the passage and searching for synonyms and antonyms in the text. Alternately, the student may use internal inferencing, in which he or she looks for clues to the word's meaning within the word itself, including attention to prefixes, suffixes, and roots (Ibid, 1987). These strategies are effective if the meaning of the word can be determined from the text itself. Most often, especially within content area textbooks, this type of inferencing is effective and may lead to more fluent reading.

Fluency

Many researchers agree that fluency is essential to successful reading and is closely tied to reading comprehension (NRP, NICHHD, 2000; Brownell and Walther-Thomas, 2000; Worthy and Broaddus, 2002; Rasinski, 2000, 2003; Hudson *et al*, 2005; Reis *et al*, 2008), but few agree on exactly how to define it. The National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000, p. 3-1) defines fluency simply as reading with "speed, accuracy, and proper expression," and goes on to say that fluent reading requires two cognitive tasks: to "recognize the printed words (decoding) and construct meaning from the recognized words (comprehension)" (Ibid, p. 3-8). Thomas and Wexler (2007, p. 24) suggest that "fluent readers decode automatically, accurately, and effortlessly with expression" while Nagy *et al*, (2006) explain that fluency requires attention to writing conventions. These conventions, such as paragraphing, capitalization, and punctuation show intonation that is not represented by the phonemes themselves. Worthy and Broaddus (2002, p. 334)

compare fluency to music, describing the phrasing, smoothness, and expressiveness of the reading as important, in addition to the rate, accuracy, and automaticity. Hudson *et al*, (2005, p. 702) add that fluent readers read accurately, with a conversational rate, and with expression over "long periods of time", "after long periods of no practice" and "across texts". Fluent reading sounds natural, is accurate, quick, and includes proper expression (Penner-Wilger, 2008). Most researchers discuss fluency in regards to oral reading because oral reading can be heard and evaluated while silent reading cannot. But if the purpose of reading fluently is to lead to comprehension, I would argue that fluent silent reading, the sound of one's voice in his or her head, is just as essential as oral fluency. If oral reading fluency is taught it can be transferred to silent reading.

One aspect of fluency, and a term which is often used interchangeably, is automaticity. According to Ehri (2005), automaticity is the ability to recognize, pronounce, and understand words when they are seen without decoding them and occurs automatically for proficient readers. But struggling readers who do not understand alphabetic principles and lack basic word-recognition skills have a difficult time becoming fluent, automatic readers (Brownell and Walther-Thomas, 2000). Automaticity is certainly related to reading rate, which will be discussed further.

Oral prosody, which includes reading with expression and signals questions, surprise, and exclamation, is also an aspect of fluent reading (Hudson *et al*, 2005). Like Worthy and Broaddus' (2002) explanation of fluency, Hudson *et al*, (2005, p. 704) describe prosody as the "rhythmic and tonal aspects of speech: the *music* of oral language". Penner-Wilger (2008) describes prosody as reading naturally with proper expression and phrasing. Hudson *et al*, (2005, p. 704) add that "a fundamental task of

fluent reading is to supply the prosodic features in a text, although they are not graphically represented" and that reading with expression is an important component of fluency instruction and leads to comprehension (Ehri, 2005). One could argue that fluency encompasses prosody, but that the reverse is not true.

Fluent reading leads to a greater understanding of the text (Worthy and Broaddus, 2002) and is essential to comprehension. Fluency is a characteristic of a strong reader (Hudson *et al,* 2005; Reis *et al,* 2008), and "one of the most common manifestations of reading problems" is "slow, disfluent , or... ineffective reading" (Rasinski, 2000 p. 146). It is agreed that fluency and automaticity of decoding must occur before students can comprehend effectively (Carbo, 1995; Rasinski, 2000, 2003; Wright and Cleary, 2006; Thomas and Wexler, 2007). A lack of fluency is a key contributor to reading difficulties (Rasinski, 2003). Rasinski (2000) suggests that teachers perceive fluent reading as proficient reading. From this, therefore, it can be assumed that a fluent reader likely has a firm understanding of phonics, decodes words automatically, and is attentive to the text and to the standard conventions of print because proficiency in these skills leads to fluent reading.

Developing Fluency

Rasinski (2000, 2003) suggests that fluency can be taught, so the task for teachers is to develop fluent readers. Research (Rasinski, 2000, 2003; Worthy and Broaddus 2002; Hudson *et al*, 2005; Thomas and Wexler, 2007) suggests five main ways teachers can help their students develop fluency in reading: by encouraging fluency through phrasing, by modelling good oral reading, by providing oral reading support, by offering opportunities for practice and repeated readings of texts, and through independent

reading. Worthy and Broaddus (2002) and Hudson *et al*, (2005) also point out that fluency should be explicitly taught, rather than left to chance. Classrooms that foster fluency development offer regular opportunities for reading in small groups, with partners, and individually (Worthy and Broaddus, 2002, p. 335). Rasinski (2003, p. 133) adds that good oral reading instruction involves "reading to children, reading with children, and listening to children read". Therefore, oral reading can be taught through differentiated instruction and flexible grouping.

Model good oral reading explicitly, Rasinski (2003) suggests, by reading a passage fluently and contrasting this with a word-by-word reading of the same text then asking students to notice the difference between the two readings. Finally, pointing out the difference between only reading every word accurately and reading with pacing, phrasing, and expression can help students (2003). Rasinski (2000) suggests that this type of direct instruction in expressive reading helps struggling readers understand written language, and Hudson *et al*, (2005, p. 703) point out the value of direct instruction in fluency because of the "strong correlation between reading fluency and comprehension". To develop fluency, Worthy and Broaddus (2002) suggest providing students with opportunities to read texts at their independent reading level, with at least 95 percent accuracy, daily. This often does not happen in secondary classrooms where the textbooks are too difficult for struggling readers, and are in fact often written at up to two years above the grade level of the course. When students read easier texts that they can read independently, they develop fluency and improve their overall reading ability (Rasinski, 2000). Thomas and Wexler (2007) add that teachers should help students find books at their own independent reading levels that they can comprehend, as well as read

fluently. Teachers read alouds and recorded books, which will be discussed later in this chapter, have been shown to model fluency (Carbo, 1995) and can help to improve reading rate.

Reading Rate

One element of fluency that should be discussed is that of reading rate. Although the goal is to develop fluent, not fast, reading, teachers need to realize that slow reading may be indicative of a reading problem (Rasinski, 2000). In his study of 600 students in grades 2 -5 in the United States, Rasinski (2000, p. 146) found that reading rate "was a significant factor in classroom teacher's perceptions of their students' proficiency in reading". Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006) and Constantinidou and Stainthorp (2008) suggest that reading rate is an indicator of overall reading competency and is strongly related to comprehension. Hudson *et al*, (2005) had similar findings, and go on to suggest that slow reading can lead to a lack of comprehension, a failure to complete assigned tasks, a loss of interest in school, and a lack of reading pleasure. Because of these factors, they suggest that reading rate should be included as an element of fluency instruction and should not be ignored (Rasinski, 2000; Hudson *et al*, 2005; Hasbrouck and Tindal, 2006; Constantinidou and Stainthorp, 2008). (See Table 1 for proficient reading rates.) A low reading rate may indicate a lack of sight word memory or that the student struggles with phonological retrieval (Ehri, 2005; Catts and Kamhi, 2005).

Table 1: Proficient Reading Rates

Grade	Autumn	Winter	Spring
1		23	53
2	51	72	89
3	72	92	107
4	94	112	123
5	110	127	139
6	127	13	140
7	128	136	150
7 – 75 percentile	156	165	177
7 – 90 percentile	180	192	202
8	133	146	151
8 – 75 percentile	161	173	177
8 – 90 percentile	185	199	199

(from Hasbrouck and Tindal, 2006, p. 639)

Hasbrouck and Tindal's table reflects reading rates in the 50th percentile, or the average range, except where the 75th and 90th percentiles are indicated. They suggest that a reading rate within ten words above or below the numbers on the table should be considered 'normal' and demonstrate that the student is making adequate progress. They remind us that fluency measures do not "provide a full profile of a student's overall reading skill level" (Hasbrouck and Tindal, 2006, p. 640). They suggest that reading rate should be evaluated a minimum of three times a year, beginning in the middle of first grade. Hasbrouck and Tindal did not provide an explanation of why spring to autumn scores decrease. It is possible that this could be explained by the 'Summer Reading Slump' (Kim, 2004), a phenomenon in which students' reading scores drop over the summer months due to a lack of reading and reading instruction. Another interesting point to note about the table is that the rate for the 90th percentile is higher in seventh grade than in eighth grade, and at the 90th percentile in eighth grade, there is a smaller rate of growth than in other grade levels. Although not discussed by Hasbrouck and

Tindal, a possible explanation for this is that students reading at this level are reading increasingly difficult texts, and therefore growth slows down.

Although disfluent reading often indicates a lack of comprehension, it should be recognized that occasionally this is not the case. Catts and Kamhi (2005) suggest that students with a slower reading rate may have developed reading skills in the primary grades, but as reading materials became more difficult their rate decreased. The purpose for reading certainly does affect reading rate (Grabe and Stoller, 2002). Perhaps some older readers with a slower reading rate are trying to improve their comprehension by reading the text slowly. Catts and Kamhi (2005) add that some students decode on grade level but are deficient in reading rate.

Students' reading rate and fluency will be highest when they are reading texts at their independent reading levels. Texts read at 95-100 percent accuracy, or with 5 or fewer miscues per 100 words, are generally accepted as being the student's independent reading level. A student's instructional reading level is 90-94 percent accuracy, or 6-10 miscues in a 100 word passage; these texts can be read with support. The frustration level of reading is considered to be below 90 percent accuracy, or 11or more miscues in a 100 word passage. Carver and Leibert (1995) suggest that reading texts at the frustration level can have negative effects on the student. When secondary students face textbooks that are well beyond their instructional reading level they become frustrated and often give up on even attempting to read the text. As a result, their learning suffers. In his study, Rasinski (2000) found that the comprehension of 'at grade level' passages read by identified struggling readers averaged at these students' frustration level. However these students' reading rate was at 50-60 percent of their instructional level. Because reading

rate is a factor in teacher's perception of reading proficiency, Hudson *et al* (2005) suggest that reading rate should be assessed.

Rasinski (2000) suggests that reading rate can be improved through repeated reading, poetry reading, practicing scripts for a performance such as Reader's Theatre, paired reading, and buddy reading. Allen (2000) adds to this list shared reading, in which the teacher reads aloud a text of which students have a copy followed by student reading of the text. While these activities lead to improved reading rates, oral readings also lead to improved fluency.

Oral Reading Support and Practice

It is widely agreed upon that reading practice leads to improved reading and that repeated readings of a text leads to improved fluency (Koskinen *et al,* 1995; Reissner, 1997; Worthy and Broaddus, 2002; Rasinski, 2003; Hudson *et al,* 2005; Penner-Wilger, 2008). More specifically, repeated reading with teacher feedback and guidance leads to an improvement in "word recognition, fluency, and comprehension" (Worthy and Broaddus, 2002, p. 336). Wright and Cleary (2006) suggest that the feedback is especially beneficial to struggling readers, and Thomas and Wexler (2007) add that struggling adolescent readers, especially, need more practice and repeated reading. According to Rasinski (2003) there are numerous benefits to repeated reading, including that it: helps students remember facts and important information and vocabulary, is a study strategy that will be used throughout life, improves comprehension, leads to higher level questioning, promotes faster and more fluent reading, and helps students develop more meaningful phrasing. It is interesting that Rasinski points out that repeated reading helps students comprehend and remember important information because these skills are

especially important in secondary school where students are expected to read and gain information from a great number of nonfiction texts in their content area classrooms, yet repeated reading and the opportunity to develop fluency are rare occurrences in middle school because of the length of the texts.

Silent Reading and Fluency Development

The National Reading Panel Report (NICHHD, 2000) claimed that silent reading does not improve fluency. Many teachers who are proponents of silent reading argue that fluency is not the purpose of silent reading time. Penner-Wilger (2008), however, claims that independent silent reading *is*, in fact, one way to improve reading fluency. Although I would agree with the argument that fluency is not the sole purpose of silent reading (more on this later), I must agree that it can improve fluency – especially if the text read silently is read repeatedly. Silent rehearsal of a text can lead to increased fluency and eventually to increased comprehension.

Comprehension

Reading is about making meaning (Palincsar, 2009), which brings us to the final, and perhaps the most complex of the Reading Pillars defined by the National Reading Panel Report (NICHHD, 2000): comprehension, which is the goal of reading (Rasinski, 2003). Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) explain that exposure to print and comprehension are reciprocal: those who read more understand more, and those who comprehend more read more. Comprehension is the understanding of a text, but it is more than this. Comprehension involves deeper, higher-level thinking about a text. It leads to more questions, to synthesis, to evaluation, and to interpretation. Comprehension requires the integration of ideas and construction of understanding by the reader

(Garnham and Oakhill, 1996). It requires processing (Pressley *et al*, 1996) and interaction with the text (Reutzel and Hollingsworth, 1988). According to Graesser *et al*, (1994, p. 374), benefits of comprehension include that the "reader draws inferences that are relevant and correct", "asks good questions", the "reader's answers to questions are relevant, correct, and informative", and the "reader can paraphrase the message and generate good summaries". In other words, comprehension is understanding and leads to learning, thinking, and 'real reading'.

However, many struggling readers do not realize that reading should make sense or lead to learning (Allen, 2000). These are what Palincsar (2009, p. 8) calls "stingy readers" who are not prepared to comprehend the texts that they read. She contrasts them with "generous readers" who "expect the text to make sense and recognise that they have an active role to play in that sense making".

Mental Model and Schema Theory

According to Kintsch (1998), we understand the world around us by creating mental models. These mental models, often in narrative form (Graesser *et al*, 1995; Kintsch, 1998), are based on integrating new information with previously learned information, or background knowledge. We operate within the world and comprehend, perceive, and problem solve based on the environment these models operate within (Ibid, 1998). Kintsch (1998) describes five levels of mental models: procedural and perceptual representations, episodic representations, nonverbal representations, verbal representations, and abstract representations. As one moves from procedural up to abstract, the levels become more abstract and the degree of attention required for processing the model increases (Kintsch, 1998).

Procedural and perceptual representations are acquired unconsciously. Activities like brushing one's teeth fit into this level. Although a new procedure can be learned, the "repetition and reinforcement [of the activity] determine the learning process" (Kintsch 1998, p. 17). Episodic representations are based on memory and can be reflected upon. Learning that occurs at this level occurs through experiences and is goal-directed.

The third level of mental model is nonverbal representation. At this level, representations are intentional and may be communicative, although not always (Kintsch, 1998). Body language is one example of this level of representation. Nonverbal representation is situated within in a social community.

At the fourth level are verbal representations. These mental models are narrative, linear, and analytic for processing information (Kintsch, 1988). Verbal representations are "rule-governed, as in semantic memory, propositional memory, discourse comprehension, analytic thought, induction, and verification" (Ibid, p. 18). At this level, one makes sense of the world through story.

The final level is abstract representation (Kintsch, 1998). These representations are learned, rather than being natural. These representations lead to logical thought, formal argument, measurement, and categorizing. This is the level at which teaching is directed. Abstract representation depends upon written language (Kintsch, 1998).

Readers comprehend text by creating a mental model at the abstract representation level that connects new ideas and concepts to prior background knowledge. Information from a text is processed sequentially, and soon after reading the information is integrated into what's already known (Garnham and Oakhill, 1996; Kintsch, 1998). The reader's goal is to construct this mental model that represents what

the text is about (Kintsch, 1998). Because this is done at an abstract level, it can be difficult for struggling readers to create these models. Graesser *et al*, (1995) and Kintsch (1998) both suggest that readers construct mental models to comprehend in the form of narrative texts. And Kintsch (1998) adds that we learn about the world in the form of stories, specifically. Memory representations are a generalization of past events, in narrative form, which can guide action and be reflected upon. In reading, this is background knowledge, which is crucial to comprehension (Pressley *et al*, 1996).

Kintsch (1998) contrasts mental models with schema theory. Schema theory, he explains, is a top down structure regulating comprehension. According to Piaget and Faigel (1966), new ideas are developed from a previous framework, or schema, which leads to cognitive development as more complex ideas are built. Bhattacharya and Han (2001) describe schema as the basic building blocks of thinking, and Kintsch (1998) agrees that comprehension is a bottom up approach to meaning making. In reading, schema theory fills in gaps and aids the reader in creating correct inferences. I prefer a different analogy for schema theory, in which the schema is a file cabinet. It contains different drawers with files of organized information – a reader's background knowledge. When a reader reads a text, he or she can pull background information from the file cabinet or put new information into a folder in the cabinet. Schema allows the reader to organize the information and access it as needed. Rather than being top down or bottom up, this view of schema is more reciprocal. The reader him or herself is doing the work of processing, connecting, and storing information. Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1988) agree that reciprocity is related to comprehension. Whether the model is bottom up, top

down, or reciprocal, it is clear that a reader must actively engage in a text to do the work of comprehension.

Fluency and Comprehension

Comprehension is closely tied to fluency. Fluent oral reading and prosody lead to comprehension during silent reading, and are integral parts of proficient reading (Worthy and Broaddus, 2002; Hudson *et al,* 2005; Penner-Wilger, 2008). Although readers may comprehend adequately when they do not read fluently, this is less likely to be the case (Rasinski, 2000). More likely, explains Rasinski (2000), students who read nonfluently are focusing on decoding and therefore do not attend to comprehension.

Biancarosa and Snow (2006) criticize many reading programmes and initiatives because they view them as focused on early literacy skills, such as decoding, and suggest that they ignore the comprehension skills which are needed throughout life. Oakhill *et al,* (2003), however, argue for the teaching of decoding independently from comprehending because they use a different set of skills. This does not mean, however, that comprehension skills should be neglected in the primary grades when children are first learning to decode. In fact, primary texts often include a repeated pattern which supports both decoding and comprehension. Center (2009, p. 6) argues that "reading is the product of decoding and comprehension". Both are necessary.

Students who read nonfluently may not attend to the conventions that could aid their comprehension. Syntax and semantics may support comprehension because students who have a strong grasp of the sound and structure of language may be more likely to notice when meaning begins to break down, while students who do not attend to syntax have difficulty decoding (Garnham and Oakhill, 1996; Oakhill *et al,* 2003). Just

as exposure to print is in a reciprocal relationship with comprehension, Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) suggest that exposure to print develops an understanding of syntax that leads to comprehension.

Brooks (2002) explains that students who struggle to comprehend may not struggle to decode. This is often the case for struggling readers at the secondary level who struggle for many reasons. To help students comprehend proficiently, we need to determine "which components of comprehension are failing" (Oakhill *et al*, 2003 p. 448). However, as Brooks (2002) points out, there have been few studies conducted on helping students who can decode but do not comprehend. Likewise, there have been few studies on the varying levels of comprehension.

Literal and Higher Level Comprehension

In their survey of middle grades readers, Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that most students reported that they typically disliked assigned texts in class because of a lack of understanding, in spite of that fact that much class time was spent on comprehension activities. The students' lack of understanding could be caused by several different factors. Fisher (2008) suggests that there are three levels of comprehension: literal, in which the reader is able to relate what was written in the text; interpretative, in which the reader is able to make inferences about the text; and evaluative, in which the student offers a personal response to the text. Literal comprehension fits Kintsch's (1998) mental model at the verbal level, while interpretative and evaluative comprehension are at the abstract level.

The ability to reach the higher levels of comprehension by inferring and responding personally separate a proficient reader from a struggling reader (Fisher,

2008). Graesser *et al,* (1994) add that comprehension improves as the reader moves to higher levels, while Skidmore (2000) suggests using open-ended questions to allow students to develop their own understandings of texts. It is likely that the students in Ivey and Broaddus's (2001) study were not moving beyond the literal level of comprehension because many traditional comprehension activities are conducted at the literal, or text level, only. These types of materials, which are often in the form of multiple choice questions, do not require students to read critically or to develop personal responses, but rather to simply recall what was written in the text (Keene, 2011). These activities do little to develop students' higher order thinking skills and deeper understandings of texts and lead to passive reading. Many comprehension tests, which evaluate the literal level only, thereby evaluating short term memory, also lead to passive reading (Ibid).

Palincsar and Brown (1984) suggest that a well-written, reader friendly, or considerate, text aids comprehension. Ivey and Fisher (2006, p. 18) agree with this idea suggesting that "easy-to-read texts supported by compelling graphics and photographs are an excellent alternative for instructing students in critical reading," in which students recognize textual clues that aid their comprehension. Garnham and Oakhill (1996) add that texts contain cues that an inference is needed; 'because' is one example of such a cue and suggests a relationship between two statements. Teaching students to identify these statements and to infer what is needed for comprehension is one type of critical reading. This critical reading combined with thinking and discussing at the interpretative and evaluative levels develops comprehension. As mentioned earlier, much of the reading done in school at the secondary level is in the form of textbooks, which are neither well-written nor considerate, therefore it is much more difficult for students, especially

struggling readers, to think critically about the subjects in their textbooks. However, this type of critical thinking, in which students read beyond what is written in the text and connect it to other information in order to develop their own understandings, is exactly the type of thinking that these texts require.

Earl *et al*, (2000, p. 33) criticizes the National Literacy Strategy in England as failing to address higher order thinking and deep understandings which, they write, "become paramount for learning" in the upper grades. Likewise in the United States traditional materials used for test preparation do little to develop more than a literal understanding of texts. "High-stakes tests can become the rationale for all that is done in classrooms" (Harlen and Deakin Crick, 2002, p. 4). Lower level and remedial classes, especially, are focused on comprehension tests which are "ineffective in promoting cognitive change" (Skidmore 2000, p. 289). Skidmore (2000) goes on to say that students need opportunities within the classroom to respond to texts authentically, as real readers would, rather than answering multiple choice questions. By intermediate grades, write Allor *et al*, (2006), critical thinking skills should replace the early literacy techniques taught in the primary grades. Open-ended questions with no correct answer lead to richer thinking and understanding of a text, as opposed to simple recall questions which do neither (Skidmore, 2000). When students have the opportunity to form and defend their ideas in class, their comprehension improves (Skidmore, 2000). Pressley *et al*, (1996) found that in the classrooms of effective literacy teachers, 93 percent of the teachers taught a variety of critical thinking skills, including brainstorming, categorizing, recalling, evaluating, and creating graphic organizers. This suggests that critical thinking is an important aspect of literacy instruction.

Teaching students to comprehend and think at higher levels is possible. The choice of materials used in class, curricular choices, teacher preparedness, and assessment can all lead to comprehension (Palincsar, 2009). Brooks (2002) adds that direct instruction of comprehension skills and strategies may benefit students. According to Fisher (2008, p.20), leading students to higher levels of comprehension "is shaped by approaches to learning drawn from a social constructivist perspective, where children are encouraged to talk, think, and read their way to constructing meaning," while Graesser *et al*, (1994, p. 337) describe what they call the "search-after meaning principle" in which students "attempt to construct meaning out of text, social interactions, and perceptual input" suggesting that true comprehension goes well beyond the confines of the text. Therefore, teachers must teach students to reach higher levels of comprehension.

Teaching Higher Level Thinking: Strategy Instruction

Because the goal of reading is to comprehend, effective literacy instruction must include teaching students how to comprehend. Phelps (2005) found that direct instruction of comprehension has been found to be successful and can be taught through strategy instruction which is based on the idea that it is possible to teach all readers to do what proficient readers do as they are reading. Strategies should be modelled by the teacher, as the expert reader in the classroom, first (Pressley *et al*, 1987; Harvey and Goudvis, 2000; Tovani, 2000, 2004; Keene, 2008). Palincsar and Brown (1984, p. 120) suggest that there are six strategies for comprehension: understanding the purpose, activating background knowledge, attending to the context, evaluating the content, monitoring comprehension and self-questioning, and drawing inferences. I have seen several different lists of strategies that good readers use for comprehension, some with

six strategies and some with seven. But all of the lists include essentially these same elements in some form. Palincsar and Brown (1984) add that summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting are both comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities.

Serran (2002) agrees that teachers must teach a variety of comprehension strategies to their students, while Phelps (2005) points out that scaffolding instruction is more important to comprehension than which strategies are taught. I agree that scaffolding instruction is important; we must effectively teach students to use strategies before they will be successful in using them on their own. However, I do not agree that considering which strategies are taught is unimportant. The strategies that Palincsar and Brown (1984) suggest are essential to comprehension and to higher-level thinking about texts and should all be taught.

So how is this higher level thinking taught? Teachers must teach students to think about texts through strategy instruction. Pressley *et al*, (1987) call effective strategy instruction dyadic instruction, and point out that it is also known as reciprocal instruction or scaffolded instruction (p. 86) and is based on Vygotsky's (1986, 1987) idea of ZPD. In this type of instruction, the teacher models and explains the strategy in use, then guides students through using the strategy until they can use it independently. Modelling alone is not sufficient for struggling readers (Pressley *et al*, 1987). Brownell and Walther-Thomas (2000) suggest that strategy instruction should begin in earnest in third grade and be on-going throughout the school year and subsequent grade levels. Some of the strategies teachers should use to teach students to comprehend include teaching before, during, and after reading strategies, activating background knowledge, teaching inference

and questioning skills, teaching predicting, confirming and rejecting predictions, clarifying, synthesizing, analyzing, and criticizing (Allen, 2000; Harvey and Goudvis, 2000; Tovani, 2000, 2004; Thomas and Wexler, 2007; Keene, 2008). These strategies move students toward independence in reading (Palincsar, 2009). According to Maybin (2000, p.207), "there is a shift of attention away from events and practices... to the processes which are involved in the mediation of texts". In other words, knowing what to do with a difficult text is an emphasis in current reading instruction.

Barton and Hamilton (2000) point out that through education and training, the literacy practices of struggling readers can be changed. Barton (2000) suggests that personal reflection can improve a student's literacy skills. In other words, teachers should attend to what readers are doing and teach the specific strategies that proficient readers use to comprehend and interact with texts. Teachers teach their students to attend to their own reading and to articulate what they do when they are reading or when they become stuck in their reading, while Palincsar (2009) adds that student conversations should play a part in comprehension instruction. Galton *et al,* (2009, p.121) suggest that when instruction is "structured in ways that facilitate learning at a metacognitive rather than procedural level" substantial improvement in learning can occur.

Teaching students reading strategies and to be strategic thinkers about their reading can occur in several ways. Zhang and Hoosain (2001, p.184) suggest that the title of a piece may "form the foundation for comprehension of the text that follows". I have found that many struggling readers were unable to tell the titles of any books they enjoyed, even if they had a book in mind; therefore if a title aids comprehension, perhaps inattention to the title detracts from it. In classrooms, if teachers teach students to attend

to the titles of pieces and call pieces by their title when discussing them, perhaps students' comprehension could improve. Zhang and Hoosain (2001) also suggest that the title of a piece can activate background knowledge and lead the reader to make inferences about the text.

One element of instruction that is especially important to teach students is to monitor their own comprehension and to realize when their comprehension has broken down. This is an important first step in getting comprehension back on track. Palincsar and Brown (1984) call these 'debugging' strategies. I prefer the term 'fix-up strategies' but both are essentially the same thing. They require students to stop and determine where their comprehension broke down and then work out how to make comprehension occur again. Lenihan (2003) suggests that rereading and reading aloud are two strategies that help put comprehension back on track. These are also, perhaps, the simplest fix-up strategies. But for struggling readers who have not learned that text should make sense, these strategies are rarely used and must be taught and modelled for students.

According to Rasinski (2003), imagery promotes comprehension. If one observes very young children, they will notice that children "read" a book by looking at the illustrations and telling what happens. Maintaining 'a movie in your mind' is a sure sign of comprehension, and the loss of that movie is an early sign that comprehension is breaking down. In the classroom, pausing students periodically to illustrate a scene from the text may reinforce imagery and work as a fix-up strategy. Pressley *et al*, (1987) suggest teaching students many ways to respond to texts or to elaborate responses, and Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1988) add that writing summaries is one technique that aids comprehension and synthesizes information, but is especially difficult for struggling

readers. Students who use strategies well know when they need to try a strategy to enhance their comprehension, and can switch to a different strategy if one is not working (Pressley *et al*, 1987).

Brownell and Walther-Thomas (2000) suggest that teaching reading strategies to students is not difficult, and they offer four tips. First, they suggest, teaching students the value of reading strategies and how they can improve their reading. Second, the teacher can demonstrate each strategy through a think-aloud by verbally explaining to students what is happening inside his or her head while reading a particular text (Ibid, 2000). Third, they suggest supporting students as they are learning to use the strategies and remind them to use the strategies on their own. Finally, they suggest encouraging students to reflect on their own strategy use (Ibid, 2000). Again, this fits into Vygotsky's ZPD paradigm (1987) because the teacher builds upon what is already known and leads the students toward greater independence and greater comprehension.

Inference and Comprehension

An inference is a conclusion that a reader draws in order to better understand a text, and is often thought of as reading between the lines. It may be as simple as realizing that something will be explained later in the text, such as a pronoun antecedent (Garnham and Oakhill, 1996) or it may be more complex. Strong readers make inferences about the texts they read. Learning to infer typically occurs after fluency has developed and while comprehension skills are developing (Cain *et al*, 2001).

Although there are several different names for them, there are two main types of inference. The first type of inference called local by Garnham and Oakhill (1996) and coherence by Cain *et al*, (2001) occurs within the text. These types of inferences help the

reader understand the ‘who’ and the ‘what’ of the text (Garnham and Oakhill, 1996). They may include predictions, drawing conclusions about a character’s personality, inferences about the setting, the characters, or cause and effect (Graesser *et al,* 1995; Cain *et al,* 2001). The second type of inference, called a global inference (Garnham and Oakhill, 1996) or an elaboration inference (Cain *et al,* 2001), goes beyond the text and aids the reader in drawing conclusions (Garnham and Oakhill, 1996). These inferences are not written in the text directly, but rather they enrich the text for the reader. They might include determining the motivations of a character or determining the tone and purpose of the writer (Graesser *et al,* 1995).

Grasser *et al,* (1994) and Cain *et al,* (2001) explain that background knowledge is essential to developing inferences. Without knowledge of personalities, settings, historical time periods, or societal norms, it is difficult to make inferences about a text. Graesser *et al,* (1994) go on to explain that if a reader lacks the necessary background knowledge, he or she will not be able to infer, and therefore not comprehend a text. The reader’s background knowledge helps him or her to create a mental model and draw inferences to understand the characters, settings, and events in the text (Graesser *et al,* 1995). According to Garnham and Oakhill (1996), the mental model theory suggests that inferences made are those most necessary for understanding a text. The reader’s goals determine what inferences he or she will make (Graesser *et al,* 1995; Garnham and Oakhill, 1996). For example, a person reading a mystery novel who wants to solve the case before the author provides all of the clues would make different types of inferences than someone reading a news feature and looking for the author’s bias.

Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1988) suggest that although children have the capacity to draw inferences, they do not do it automatically. It is up to the teacher, they add, to teach students to infer. Admittedly, teaching struggling readers to integrate their background knowledge with a text they are reading in order to draw inferences in difficult (Brownell and Walther-Thomas, 2000). However, this synthesis of ideas can be taught (Reutzel and Hollingsworth, 1988). Pressley *et al,* (1987) suggest that one way to teach inference is by asking students questions that require them to infer. This, they explain, leads to more learning than asking questions which have answers stated directly in the text. If students are taught *how* to answer inferential questions the gains, in terms of comprehension, seem to be even greater.

Passive readers fail to draw inferences (Grasser *et al*, 1994; Allen, 2000). Allen (2000, p.45) adds that we must teach students "the necessity of going back to the text and back over [their] thinking process to support [their] answers". According to Brooks (2002) inference training should be an instructional focus for students who do not comprehend well. Struggling readers are less likely than proficient readers to determine what information should help lead them to an inference (Cain *et al*, 2001). A failure to integrate the text with background knowledge is a common inference error for struggling readers, but may also be an error made by older proficient readers at times.

Types of Readers

Strong Readers and Struggling Readers

Thus far I have defined reading and I have referred to proficient readers and struggling readers. But what exactly is a good reader? And why is he or she good? Likewise, how is a struggling reader defined?

Tatum (2005) offers five characteristics of proficient readers: they make meaning, use a variety of cueing systems, self-monitor their own comprehension, think at higher levels and think beyond the literal answering of questions, and they can connect the beginning of a text to the end of it. Tatum's list refers specifically to the pillar of comprehension, including inference and higher level thinking. But his definition does not address any of the other pillars that are essential to reading. Beers (2003) defines proficient readers as those who: work out what is confusing them, set goals for completing a text, use a variety of strategies, and can make their comprehension visible. According to Palincsar and Brown (1984) a proficient reader reads differently for different purposes. For example, when reading for entertainment, they suggest, a reader will read quickly. However, if the reader is reading for comprehension or to study a text, they are likely to read more slowly and use a variety of comprehension monitoring strategies (Ibid, 1984). Cain *et al*, (2001) add that proficient readers make more inferences than less skilled readers because they monitor their own comprehension and they infer in order to fill in missing details. Again, these definitions are insufficient as they focus only on comprehension. Although the goal of reading is comprehension, there are other factors that make a reader proficient.

Palincsar and Brown (1984) add a little more. They suggest that strong readers decode and comprehend easily and quickly. When comprehension begins to break down, they explain, the reader must slow down and use strategies to comprehend difficult texts (1984). In this definition they mention decoding, but their focus is still on comprehension and comprehension monitoring. It can be concluded, then that a main

difference between strong readers and struggling readers is the ability to make meaning and to self-monitor one's own comprehension.

But is that all there is to it? We can determine fairly accurately whether a reader is proficient or not when listening to him or her read aloud, without being able to see the comprehension that is occurring inside his or her head. We typically assume that if a reader is fluent he or she is a strong reader. Rasinski (2000) suggests that fluent readers are more motivated to read and that less fluent readers are less likely to read, suggesting that less fluent readers are struggling readers and do not read as much as more proficient readers.

Based on the definition of reading discussed previously, perhaps a more complete definition of a proficient reader would describe him or her as someone who: understands and uses phonics, morphemes, and syntax to decode texts, decodes with automaticity and has a large sight vocabulary, reads with prosody, and attends to the meaning of texts using a variety of strategies while reading at or above grade level texts. Reading 'on grade level' is defined by Rasinski (2003, p.81) as "the grade at which most students should be able to read the passage with the teacher's help". He points out that the grade level equivalency of texts is usually a measure of sentence and word difficulty.

Many authors offer descriptions of proficient readers and suggest that reading proficiency can be developed. Trelease (1995, p. 9) explains that "reading is an accrued skill... in order to get better at it you must do it. And the more you read, the better you get at it." This reciprocity between reading proficiency and exposure to text is a common idea. Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) found that early proficiency in learning to read led to higher verbal ability ten years later. However, more than the rate at which one

learned to read, they found that "print exposure was consistently a significant predictor of declarative knowledge and verbal ability in 11th grade" (Cunningham and Stanovich 1997, p. 939). Trelease (1995) found that ninety-six percent of high-achieving kindergartners were read to daily; while sixty percent of underachieving kindergartners were never read to (p. 139). Simply put, strong readers read a lot and have greater exposure to print materials than less proficient readers.

What is required for proficient reading has changed through history. At one time, only the wealthy or privileged were able to read and write. Today reading skills are a necessity and are more complex than they were in the past. Allington (2006) explains that reading in the 'information age' requires higher-order literacy and synthesizing and evaluating multiple sources of information. This goes beyond the "basic levels of proficiency" (Ibid, p. 9). Teachers can develop reading proficiency in their students by providing exposure to texts and by teaching a variety of reading strategies, through various methods of instruction. Teaching reading strategies improves students' proficiency at comprehending texts (Tatum, 2005).

So if we know what a proficient reader is and we know ways to develop proficiency, why are our schools filled with struggling readers? Especially when we know that the high cost of illiteracy is school drop-out (Biancarosa and Snow, 2006). What causes these students to struggle? Maheady *et al,* (2006, p. 66) suggest that "reading failure starts early, persists, and often escalates throughout the school years, and ultimately results in pupils' failing to gain important vocabulary, background knowledge, and enjoyment from what they read". Hudson *et al,* (2005, p.704) explain that "struggling readers are often characterized as reading in a monotone [voice] without

expression or with inappropriate phrasing" and Rasinski (2000) adds that slow readers are less likely to read, and therefore do not improve their reading skills. Struggling readers need more time reading and more exposure to print (Stanovich, 1986; Ivey and Broaddus, 2001; Rasinski and Padak, 2004).

But Skidmore (2000) suggests that teachers are often led to believe that struggling readers should complete structured reading comprehension activities with only one 'correct' answer. Indeed, many 'intervention' programmes provide only this type of instruction, yet this could not be farther from the truth. Often in school, the struggling readers spend less time with text and more time completing skills worksheets that do little to improve their reading. The worksheets, in fact, may be hurting them because as Worthy *et al*, (1999) suggest, students can lose ground in reading proficiency if they do not spend time actually reading. This leads to what Stanovich (1986) calls 'the Matthew Effect' in which proficient readers read more and improve and struggling readers read less and become weaker. When they do read, struggling readers often face inconsiderate texts which do not provide enough background information (Brownell and Walther-Thomas, 2000). Instead, easy to read texts with graphics would better support struggling readers (Ivey and Fisher, 2006).

There are many differences between proficient readers and struggling readers (Stanovich, 1986). To best help the struggling readers, it is important to determine with what, specifically, they struggle (Oakhill *et al*, 2003). In their research with students who could decode proficiently but struggled to comprehend, Cain *et al*, (2001) hypothesized that a lack of background knowledge was not the only reason for struggling readers' lack of comprehension. They found that many struggling readers had difficulty remembering

the text well enough to answer literal questions. They suggest that these students had poor memory of the text, which led to poor coherence inferences. These students had a difficult time determining which information they needed to use in order to infer and therefore "construct[ed an] incomplete representation of [the] text" (Cain *et al*, 2001, p. 850). Cain *et al*, (2001) found that these students also struggled with higher order thinking skills. This may be due, at least in part, to the fact that many struggling readers read slowly, which leads to a lack of coherence in the text. Without coherence, it is difficult to connect ideas to each other and create an accurate mental model of the text. Allington and Fleming (1978) found that struggling readers read high frequency words more accurately in context than in isolation, suggesting that these students *do* use semantic and syntactic clues in their reading. However, they found that the struggling readers read word by word, sometimes taking up to twice as long to read a passage at their instructional level as proficient readers reading the same text, suggesting that they use syntax and semantics differently from proficient readers (Ibid, 1978). For proficient readers, the syntax and semantics of a text lead to inferences and a deeper understanding. For struggling readers, however, the syntax and semantics may serve only to link one word to the next, rather than to indicate the importance to the overall meaning.

Slavin *et al*, (2009) found that one to one instruction was very effective for struggling readers – more effective than whole class or small group. It takes several yeas of strategy instruction for students, and especially for struggling readers, to use strategies effectively (Brownell and Walther-Thomas, 2000). Pressley explains that using strategies is more difficult for struggling readers (Brownell and Walther-Thomas, 2000). Perhaps this is why more teachers do not employ strategy instruction in their classrooms, or do

not teach strategies consistently: even though it is effective, it is not quick. If teachers look for immediate results they may be disappointed by strategy instruction and give up. But, as Brownell and Walther-Thomas (2000) point out, struggling readers will not be 'fixed' quickly. There are no 'quick fixes'. Struggling readers need long-term support. It is important to be patient with them in their reading (Allen 1995). "Anyone can struggle given the right text," Beers (2003, p.15) explains. "The struggle isn't the issue; the issue is what the reader does when the text gets tough" (Ibid, p. 15). She suggests that teachers should teach their students, especially their struggling readers "how to struggle successfully with a text" (p. 16).

Students are unique and may not approach the same types of textual problems in the same way each time (Rogoff, 1990; Allen, 1995). However, there is support for the assumption that struggling readers can improve over time. Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) found that students who struggled with reading in first grade, but who became proficient by 3rd or 5th grade were likely to read well by the time they reached high school. But what about students who are not proficient by 5th grade?

Adolescent Readers

When students enter the upper grades, it is assumed that they have mastered basic reading skills and are prepared for content reading (Wolfson, 2008). A National Literacy Trust (2009, p.2) report suggested that adolescent literacy "seems to be totally ignored and the incorrect assumption is made that kids finishing secondary school can definitely read and write properly. Our experience of current students and recent school-leavers clearly shows that this isn't the case." Often teachers instruct as if their students read proficiently and are surprised when students lack the literacy skills necessary to complete

the task. Worthy and Broaddus (2002) found that many secondary classrooms still use round-robin reading, in which each student in succession reads aloud one paragraph, even though this technique has been shown to be ineffective. Brownell and Walther-Thomas (2000, p. 106) add that "by middle school, the content texts are poorly organized, uninteresting, and irrelevant to students' lives". The combination of poor instructional techniques and poor materials does little to improve the reading and motivation of struggling students. Beers (2003, p. 6) explains that struggling adolescent readers "sit in our classrooms disengaged, disinterested, and sometimes defiant. ...[They] prefer to get in trouble with us for not doing their work rather than be embarrassed in front of their peers for doing it wrong." When faced with reading tasks these students, she suggests, have found some strategies that are often effective for them: they stop reading the assigned text, they appeal to the teacher to read it or explain it, or they read through a text with attention only to getting through. While these avoidance strategies may be effective for getting them through a class, they do little to improve the student's reading skills or comprehension of the material. Horowitz (2000) adds that teaching struggling adolescent readers must begin with attention to their feelings.

While struggling adolescent readers may have some of the same types of reading problems as younger students, there are also elements that are unique to this age. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in the United States suggests that adolescent literacy is socially constructed (2007). Rogoff (1990, p. 8) explains that "cognitive development is embedded in the context of social relationships". When these older students read, they are more likely to discuss books with and recommend them to friends or use social networking to interact with the text and with others. The NCTE

(2007) also found that adolescents need exposure to texts in many genres, although I would argue that this is true for students of any age. Phelps (2005, p. 26) suggests that adolescent students need: teachers who understand adolescent reading, a variety of texts, instruction that causes a desire to read, instruction in reading skills, assessment in their strengths and weaknesses, and strong teachers in every content area. Although many of these are true for students of any age, it seems as if adolescent students are less likely than younger students to receive effective literacy instruction. Effective teachers are essential to the development of adolescent literacy (Phelps, 2005). For 'real reading' to occur, even older students need a comprehensive balanced approach to reading instruction.

Effective Reading Instruction

Literacy-Rich Environments

Stanovich (1986) found that students who are readers have created for themselves environments for reading that will lead to more reading growth. Struggling readers do not have this environment. If the environment is important to reading achievement, as Stanovich suggests, then it is up to teachers to provide a positive literacy environment within their classrooms so that all students can find a place for reading in their lives. A literacy-rich environment is essential to effective literacy instruction (Cole, 2003). Reading comprehension and motivation are promoted through the classroom environment (Koskinen *et al,* 1999). A literacy-rich classroom says 'reading and writing are important here' simply by the arrangement and availability of materials. The room contains a classroom library and provides students with the opportunity to read books of their choice

(Fisher and Ivey, 2006). Johnson (2005) suggests that comfy chairs, a space for read alouds, and a friendly environment can lead to the development of real readers.

A literacy-rich environment includes displays of student work, places for whole class and small group instruction, and space for students to work both individually and collaboratively. Students have access to a variety of genres of text, centres for extended learning, a writing area, and word walls. In effect, the classroom itself takes on an instructional and organizational role. Cole (2003) adds that a variety of instructional practices, including self-selected reading, partner reading, teacher-led small groups, read alouds, opportunities for students to share, thematic units, author studies, choice, social interactions, and flexible literacy activities are all part of an effective literacy classroom. Barton and Hamilton (2000) suggest that "literacy is a social practice" (p.7) and that "literacy practices are patterned by social institutions" (p. 8). Phelps (2005, p. 25) suggests that "'good teaching' may be as much an environment conducive to learning and positive teacher attitudes toward students as it is any particular curriculum or methodology," so creating an environment that embraces literacy will invite students to become real readers and provide access to the texts and instruction that develops readers.

Classroom Libraries

Because literacy events always exist in a social context, literacy "practices are shaped by social rules which regulate the use and distribution of texts" (Barton and Hamilton, 2000, p. 8). Therefore, a major element in creating a literacy-rich environment is a classroom library that provides a variety of texts to students. A strong classroom library has a minimum of about four books per student covering a variety of topics and

genres and makes trade books available to students because most ‘real reading’ is done outside the classroom.

Allen (2000) suggests that access to books is the most important factor in literacy development, and Trelease (1995, p.143) adds that “children in schools with in-class libraries read up to fifty percent more books” than children without access to classroom libraries. While school libraries are also important, classroom libraries have been found to have a larger effect on literacy development. Hurd *et al*, (2005) found that English schools that spent more money on books had higher achievement, but that total book spending in most of England’s schools was only about 0.9 percent of the school’s budget, including money spend on textbooks, while technology accounted for about 1.7 percent of the total school budget. In other words, beyond textbooks, most schools could afford to purchase about one book per student, per year (Ibid, 2005). This includes books both for classroom use and for the library. They argue that this is not enough and that a larger percentage of the budget should be devoted to purchasing books for students to read. Clark and Rumbold (2006, p. 28) suggest that “research consistently shows that one of the most effective strategies for fostering reading is the creation of a classroom library”. They go on to explain that the books in these classroom libraries help to develop phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing. If we want students to see the value in books, it is essential that books are accessible to them (Allen, 1995).

In the United States there has been a significant push for teachers to develop classroom libraries during the past ten years. Although some schools do provide funds for classroom libraries, many teachers fund these libraries on their own, leading to a significant difference between the types and numbers of books found in classroom

libraries. Teachers' methods for sharing the books with students also vary widely. Although it could be argued that students in classrooms with larger classroom libraries are at a greater advantage than those in rooms with smaller classroom libraries, and this is likely the case, research suggests that if there is any classroom library giving students access to books that makes the biggest impact on student achievement (Trelease, 1995, 2006; Clark and Rumbold, 2006).

Unfortunately, as students become older, they are less and less likely to be in classrooms with libraries, and in their study, Worthy *et al*, (1999) found that many students were not permitted to borrow books for their classroom libraries. Cremin *et al*, (2009) suggest that children in England rarely read for pleasure, which may be partially due to a lack of classroom libraries. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that the sixth grade students in their study said they were unlikely to find texts in which they were interested in their classrooms. Cremin *et al*, (2008, p. 458) suggest that teachers "need to be able to recommend books to individual learners". Teacher book recommendations can be powerful in motivating students to read, and when teachers discuss books they are reading with students, the students in turn begin recommending books to each other (Cremin *et al*, 2009). Because adolescents are more likely to read when there is a social element included, developing a strong classroom library in the upper grades promotes more reading among adolescent students. When the books are accessible and shared in class, students are more likely to pick them up, read them, and discuss them with each other.

Teacher Read Alouds

Read alouds may also lead to increased reading. Students who were read aloud to as children reap considerable benefits when they enter school. They score significantly higher in reading achievement than students who have not been read to, typically learn to read more easily, have learned the Standard English Language of books and the classroom, and have been exposed to more vocabulary (Trelease, 1995). Students who have had little exposure to print are at a disadvantage when they enter school. Although there is little teachers can do about the years before a child has started school, they have much control of the instruction the child receives in the classroom. A teacher read aloud, in which a book is read orally to the class, is important for modelling fluency and is an essential element in a comprehensive balanced literacy instruction programme (Stainthorp, 1989; Ivey and Broaddus, 2001; Worthy and Broaddus, 2002; Rasinski, 2003). Emergent readers need to hear fluent reading modelled before they begin to read independently (Carbo, 1995). Beers (1998) suggests that hearing text read aloud improves students' reading ability because the teacher is modelling fluency, the sound of written language, and voice inflection during reading, therefore Dean and Trent (2002) recommend setting aside time daily for read alouds.

Other benefits of read alouds include that they help children improve their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and attitudes about reading, build vocabulary, instil a love of reading, expose students to new texts and genres, improve comprehension, and increase student interest in books (Trelease, 1995; Rasinski, 2003; Ivey and Broaddus, 2001; Ivey and Fisher, 2006). Worthy and Broaddus (2002) add that teacher read alouds expose students to texts they could not read on their own, improve student reading rate,

phrasing, expression, and reading accuracy and lead students toward more independent reading. Additionally, students enjoy being read to (Rasinski, 2003). Carbo (1995) suggests that read alouds motivate students to read. Many teachers have had the experience of reading a book aloud to the students, and then a student chooses to read the same book. This shows that the student values the read aloud and it gives the student the benefit of repeated reading of a text.

Cremin *et al,* (2008) suggest that teachers in England my not be familiar with a sufficient number of children's books and authors to foster independent reading. However, by the end of their study, the participating teachers began to recognize the pedagogical value of reading aloud: leading students to comprehend texts, giving students an opportunity to respond to a common text, allowing teachers to model reading strategies, and allowing teachers to model how to handle a difficult text (Cremin *et al,* 2009). As the teacher is reading, he or she can stop periodically to share what he or she is thinking or wondering or predicting, and students can be invited to share what they are thinking as well because "active readers comprehend in the process of reading, not when they finish" (Allen, 1995 p. 101). Even when the teacher reads a text incorrectly, he or she can offer solid instruction by modelling what a proficient reader does when he or she reads incorrectly. The teacher can model strategies that a real reader uses when the text becomes difficult. Dean and Trent (2002) suggest that teachers read aloud for up to fifteen minutes at a time (p. 32), as a longer period of time may cause students of any age to lose interest, while Ivey and Fisher (2006) point out that teacher read alouds are essential in all content areas.

Zambo (2005, p. 503) suggests that picture books make effective read alouds for any age and can lead to comprehension because picture books are "informative, motivating, and appealing" and are a "natural way to learn". She suggests that the illustrations are helpful to students' comprehension because they visually represent body language, facial expressions, important vocabulary, and are universally appealing. I have found picture books to be useful for providing effective reading instruction even for older students. According to Stainthorp (1989), the illustrations lead to 'linguistic guessing' which helps students work out unknown words. In my study, it was valuable to teach the older students to teach their first grade buddies to use the illustrations to aid in decoding and comprehension. Rasinski (2003) suggests that it is valuable to give students time to respond after reading aloud. These few moments of sharing solidify thinking and increase comprehension and were valuable to the students who participated in my research. Sharing ideas based on a common text that all of the students are familiar with leads to increased comprehension for all students (Allen, 1995) and leads students to make their own choices about texts.

Self Selected Reading and Choice

Self Selected Reading (SSR), also called Sustained Silent Reading, Drop Everything and Read, Silent Reading Time, and various other names is a time during the school day for students to silently read books that they have chosen. The absence of Self Selected Reading from the National Reading Panel Report (NICHHD, 2000) is perhaps the most controversial aspect of the report. The Panel claimed that silent reading does not lead to fluency, but developing fluency is not the sole purpose of silent reading. Instead, the purpose is to develop the skills and behaviours of real readers including

finding books and engaging with a variety of texts. While the Panel suggests that there is no scientific data to prove the value of silent reading, other research suggests that silent reading is an important element in comprehensive balanced literacy instruction (eg. Sanacore, 1999; Ivey and Broaddus, 2001; Rasinski, 2003), and Cremin *et al,* (2009) found that students' reading scores increased on standardized tests as a result of reading for pleasure.

Giving students choice in their reading materials and time for silent reading has been found to be important to student self-efficacy and has led to increased enjoyment, engagement, and fluency, and is especially important for struggling readers (Sanacore, 1999; Thomas and Wexler, 2007; Reis *et al,* 2008; Cremin *et al,* 2009). Reis *et al,* (2008) found that when struggling readers were allowed time for Self Selected Reading, their fluency improved more than it did through direct instruction, although Worthy and Broaddus (2002) and Rasinski (2003) argue that oral reading practice does lead to an improved ability to read silently. According to Ivey and Broaddus' (2000) survey of 1,700 sixth grade students, most adolescent students know what types of books they are interested in, and they appreciate the opportunity to be allowed to choose. The students also said that they valued silent reading time during the school day and claimed that Self Selected Reading time in school gave them time to read, concentrate, comprehend, and reflect on a text without being distracted, and led to increased comprehension of texts.

Providing time in class for students to read communicates to students that reading is important. Ivey and Broaddus (2000), therefore, suggest that Self Selected Reading time should be a central component of reading instruction, and suggest that it can be effective even in content area classrooms. Worthy and Broaddus (2002) add that

including a time for sharing books following Self Selected Reading time requires students to think about and discuss the book, which aids comprehension and helps solidify ideas in the reader's mind. Sharing books also provides time for students to interact socially, which enhances adolescents' reading (NCTE, 2007).

Differentiated Reading Instruction

Rose (2009) found that high-quality teaching led to automaticity in reading. Slavin *et al,* (2009) agree that improved classroom instruction will reduce the number of students with reading difficulties. But there seem to be more and more struggling readers at higher and higher grade levels, and Allington (2006) suggests that instruction for struggling readers often goes awry. Students are exposed to more and more difficult texts as they progress through school, but often their literacy instruction, especially in content area classrooms, actually decreases. We know that students learn in different ways (Carson, 1999; Fitzgerald, 1999). For this reason a variety of instructional techniques should be implemented in the classroom. Differentiated instruction, in which students are given the opportunity to learn the same material in different ways, is often a topic of professional development and is an instructional technique teachers are encouraged to use. However, Fuchs and Fuchs (2009) found that few classrooms actually include differentiated instruction. Yet differentiated instruction, which is valuable for all students, may be especially important for struggling readers.

There is no 'quick fix' for struggling adolescent readers, reminds Phelps (2005). He suggests that 'custom tailored' instruction is essential, while Ivey and Broaddus (2001) suggest that placing emphasis on students' strengths rather than their weaknesses is valuable. A variety of ways of grouping students in general education classrooms is a

technique that could be encouraged (Fitzgerald, 1999). Because grouping students based on ability levels alone gives lower students little opportunity to improve, flexible grouping, in which group members change throughout the year, is more appropriate.

Comprehensive balanced literacy instruction includes elements that meet the various needs of all the students in the classroom. According to Fitzgerald (1999, p.100), "balance is a *philosophical perspective* about what kinds of reading knowledge children should develop and how these kinds of knowledge can be attained". A balanced approach is accepted by most teachers in the United States as better than a 'one size fits all' programme (Carson, 1999; Smydo, 2007). A benefit of a balanced approach, suggests Fitzgerald (1999), is that it provides many entry points for students and that in a balanced approach all aspects of literacy are included at every phase, to some extent.

One point that Biancarosa and Snow (2006) mentioned that is absent from many other descriptions of effective instruction is assessment. NCLB in the United States, has led to increased assessment, and in many cases an abundance of testing (Kim and Saunderman, 2005). Yet some assessment is essential because it guides instruction (Thomas and Wexler, 2007). Worthy and Broaddus (2002) agree that students should be assessed in their reading. Teachers, they suggest, should use their records of student progress to model, coach, and provide explicit instruction to their students. I have seen a focus on compelling students to pass the high-stakes tests, but little use of the assessment to actually guide instruction. Phelps (2005, p.22) found that the best test prep was "thoughtful teaching of knowledge and skills embedded in the curriculum throughout the year". Black and William (2009) suggest that formative assessment may inform teachers about the student's thinking. When teachers use both formative and summative

assessments throughout the year to guide their instruction, their students are better prepared for standardized assessments. Pressley *et al*, (1996) point out that effective literacy teachers do offer lower-level instruction to struggling readers, but this instruction is integrated into the quality instruction and higher order thinking skills that are taught to all students. When working with older students, Allen (1995) suggests asking students what works and what does not for them. As students become independent in using strategies, they will be able to determine which strategies work best to aid their comprehension. Encouraging these discussions leads students to reflexive thinking and increases their overall comprehension. Comprehensive literacy instruction is simply good instruction. Strong instruction is likely to be motivating to students.

Motivation and Collaboration in Reading

According to the NCTE (2007), engagement in literacy is directly related to motivation; if students are confident in their reading they are more likely to be engaged. According to Clark and Rumbold (2006, p. 19), "intrinsic motivation was positively related to text comprehension" while extrinsic motivation was detrimental to comprehension. It seems essential, then, that students become self-motivated in their reading. Classroom environment can affect students' motivation (Ivey and Broaddus, 2001; Phelps, 2005). Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that students reported that a variety of books on interesting topics in the classroom motivated them to read, and Phelps (2005) added that a variety of student interests must be considered in adolescent literacy instruction. Teaching using texts that interest students may motivate students more. Palincsar (2009) found that students will struggle to comprehend a difficult text if they are interested in it, therefore, matching student interests to texts is essential. Cole

(2003) found that individual interests could be encouraged in the classroom. "Learning is most beneficial when suited to the needs, interests, and strengths of the learner" (Bassett-Grundy 2004, p. 118). The research of Reis, *et al* (2008) suggests that providing choice in reading may be more effective in an urban school than in a suburban school. While my entire teaching career has been in an urban school, and I have found that giving students choice in their reading material has made a great impact on their motivation to read, it seems to make sense that all students would like some choice in their reading materials, regardless of where they live.

Student attitudes toward literacy improved with teacher-responsiveness, student ownership and choice, and a connection between school and real life (Rogoff, 1990; Carson, 1999; Ivey and Broaddus, 2001). Ivey and Broaddus (2001) add that assigned reading that is unrelated to student interests leads to poor attitudes towards reading in middle school students. Allington (2006) suggests that many students *can* read but choose to read only when it is required; this is true of many secondary students, especially (Beers, 2003).

Clark and Osborne (2008) found that interest in reading decreased with age. Hammond (2004) suggests that early school experiences affect attitudes toward learning throughout life. A reader's self-concept and the related views and attitudes become cemented with age (Clark and Osborne, 2008). Clark and Rumbold (2006, p. 17) found that "if children do not enjoy reading when they are young, then they are unlikely to do so when they get older". They suggest that motivation to read should begin at a young age to combat 'the Matthew effect' (Stanovich, 1986). Worthy, *et al* (1999) found that reading easy materials builds fluency and improves students' attitudes. Improved

attitudes, they suggest lead students to read more difficult materials. It seems then, that while students are most motivated to read at a young age, adolescents can still be motivated to read. Offering choice, variety in materials, and opportunities to collaborate improve students' attitudes toward reading. Improved attitudes motivate students to read increasingly difficult texts and improve their overall reading skills. (Clark and Rumbold , 2006; Palincsar, 2009).

According to Webb and Mastergeorge (2003), learning is a social process; meaning is not developed in isolation. They suggest that students construct their thinking and then revise their thinking through interactions with peers. Group work, according to Galton and Hargreaves (2009), improves student learning and attitudes; it is an emotional activity. Collaboration is especially important to reading development and comprehension, and hence, a necessary part of reading (Cole, 2003). Skidmore (2000) suggests that talking with others can help students who are struggling with comprehension develop deeper understandings. Rogoff (1990, p. 14) however, explains that "Vygotsky proposed that cognitive processes occur first on the social plane; these shared processes are internalized, transformed, to form the individual plane". In other words, "what the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow" (Vygotsky 1986, p. 188). While Skidmore (2000) suggests that students develop their ideas and enhance them through conversation, Rogoff (1990) argues that many ideas and understandings are developed by a group. Whether individual ideas lead to group ideas, or group ideas inform individual ideas, it is clear that discussion is important to the comprehension of texts and to 'real reading'. Kucan and Beck (1997) agree that talking and thinking about text is important to becoming literate and leads to vocabulary growth

which enhances comprehension. According to Barton and Hamilton (2000, p. 13), "it is important to shift from a conception of literacy located in individuals to examine ways in which people in groups utilise literacy. In this way, literacy becomes a community resource, realised in social relationships rather than a property of individuals." When students talk about their thinking, they enhance their understanding (Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Skidmore, 2000; Kucan and Beck, 1997), but Rogoff (1990, p. 161) points out that "studies suggest that it is not the presence of a partner that matters, but the *nature of interaction* between the partners". This seems to indicate that it is not enough to simply place students with a partner or in groups, but rather that the students should be instructed in how to work together for productive collaboration to occur.

Influencing the Home Environment

It is widely agreed that parents and the home environment impact students' literacy success or failure and students' future love of reading (Koskinen *et al,* 1995; Rasinski and Padak, 2004; Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Dean and Trent (2002) add that students who are not read to growing up are more likely to have negative attitudes toward reading than those who have been read to because parents and family members are the most important reading role models for students (Pitt, 2000; Clark *et al,* 2009). But Trelease (1995) suggests that undereducated parents do not know the value of reading to their children, owning books in the home, owning a library card, subscribing to a newspaper, or conversation. Undereducated adults are more often in a lower socio-economic group than more educated adults, which affects their children. (Lubienski and Crane, 2010) There is a strong correlation between low levels of reading achievement and low socio-economic levels (Tatum, 2005). In my own classroom and school I have

seen the negative effects of poverty on families and especially on students and their achievement in school. I have had students who had no idea they could borrow books free from the public library, because in 14 years of life they had never been there.

While it is not possible for schools and teachers to do much about the socio-economic levels of their students' families, it is possible to have an influence on what occurs in the home, with regard to literacy practices. Finding ways to help parents support classroom literacy instruction in the home and after they enter school is crucial to students' success (Koskinen *et al*, 1995; Rasinski and Padak, 2004; Clark and Rumbold, 2006; National Literacy Trust, 2009), and Rose (2009) added that students did best when their home and school worked together. Many parents are willing to help their students and to support what is occurring in the classroom, but do not know what to do. However, in contrast to these studies, Hendrix (1999, p. 340) argues that family literacy models often try "to make up for some lack within a family" and only reach the families who are willing and able to participate in the programme.

Diller (1999), however, found that parents appreciated explicit help in learning how to help their children at home. One powerful tool is teaching parents to use the public library. If "schools would teach parents *how* to use the library... [they] would be more apt to help [their] children do so" (Diller, 1999, p. 822).

The research of Bloome *et al* (2000) on family and community literacy suggests that there is a distinction between school literacy practices and family literacy which is often centred on the adult's interests. However, they point out that bedtime story reading is similar to school reading and that during this type of reading, the parent often takes on the role of the teacher. In this way, the parent becomes the reading mentor. If bedtime

story reading does reflect school reading in this way, schools need to consider educating parents on the value of bedtime stories as a way to improve the child's reading skills. Koskinen *et al* (1999) found that adding a home-reading component increased student reading achievement, interest, and quantity, and that students who participated in at-home reading with recorded books chose to read during free time significantly more often that those children who did not have access to recorded books.

Recorded Books

A recorded book, also called an audio book, is a cassette tape, CD, or MP3 recording of a text being read aloud. These can be effective instructional tools for students when the recording is listened to while the text of the book is being read (Rasinski, 2003). There have been numerous studies of recorded books, and it is widely agreed that recorded books improve fluency because, like teacher read alouds, they model fluent reading of a text (Carbo, 1995; Koskinen *et al,* 1995; Bobrick, 1998; Sanacore, 1999; Worthy and Broaddus, 2002; Daniels and Zemelman, 2004; Grover and Hannegan, 2005, 2008; Hudson *et al,* 2005; Cardillo, 2007; Wolfson, 2008). However, recorded books allow students to work independently without the teacher's attention.

Recorded books are effective because listening comprehension is higher than reading comprehension. In other words, a child can listen to and understand a text that he or she could not read independently. Listening comprehension is a valuable skill to develop because, according to Beers (1998, p.32), "listening comprehension proficiency in kindergarten and first grade is a moderately good predictor of the level of reading comprehension attained by third grade". She goes on to explain that a student's listening comprehension in fifth grade predicts the student's reading proficiency in high school.

Recorded books provide a scaffold that allows students to read at a higher level (Beers, 1998).

Recorded books have also been shown to improve students' reading comprehension skills because students do not have to work to decode the text and can use their memory to concentrate on comprehending (Reissner, 1996; Bobrick, 1998; Worthy and Broaddus, 2002; Grover and Hannegan, 2005; Wolfson, 2008). Beers (1998) found that in one middle school classroom the reading scores of all twenty-three students in the class rose by at least two grade levels after using recorded books. Although it is likely that the classroom teacher also provided effective reading instruction in addition to the recorded books, these data seem promising.

Bobrick (1998) found that struggling readers often did not have books at home or much access to books outside of school and needed extra support at school. Reissner (1997) suggests that using recorded books may help bring struggling readers to a level comparable to students who were raised in a print-rich environment. They also help support struggling readers and allow them to read books that their peers read and books that they were interested in, but written at a higher level than the students could read independently (Allen, 2000; Cardillo *et al*, 2007). Carver and Leibert (1995) add that having students listen to texts slightly above their independent reading level may improve their reading level and vocabulary. Koskinen *et al*, (1995) also suggest that recorded books support beginning readers by providing the practice that is necessary when learning to read. In their study of using recorded books with beginning readers, they found that the recorded books "led to a definite increase in children's fluency and reading independence, as well as increase student interest in books" (Koskinen *et al*, 1995, p. 1).

The parents and teachers of these students noticed increased fluency and confidence in the students.

Other benefits of recorded books include that they motivate students and are fun to read, encourage repeated readings of texts, enhance listening comprehension skills, and allow students to read more difficult texts (Koskinen *et al,* 1995; Koskinen *et al,* 1999; Bobrick, 1998; Grover and Hannegan, 2005; Cardillo *et al,* 2007; Grover and Hannegan, 2008).

Because of the benefits of recorded books, I wanted to include them in my programme. However, one drawback of recorded books is that they can be quite expensive and purchasing very many becomes cost prohibitive. Sanacore (1999) suggests that recorded books can be 'homemade' which is a much more cost effective option for developing a library of recorded books. When creating recorded books, it is important to have a fluent model reading the text, reading that is expressive, but slow enough for the reader to follow along, an accurate reading, and pause of about three seconds to allow students to look at the pictures (Koskinen *et al,* 1995; Cardillo *et al,* 2007). Older students can record books for younger students (Koskinen *et al,* 1995; Rasinski, 2003), as in my study, or students can create books for their own classroom library (Worthy and Broaddus, 2002).

As students practice reading the book before recording it, they are developing fluency (Worthy and Broaddus, 2002; Rasinski, 2003; Daniels and Zemelman, 2004). These ideas were valuable to me during my research study because the older students created recorded books for the younger buddies, and using the ideas of these researchers I taught students to make recorded books that were useful and accurate.

Reading Interventions

'Programmes' or One to One Instruction

The Buddy Reading Programme, unlike many pre-packaged programmes provides one to one instruction for both the middle school students and for the first grade buddies. As I was considering this approach, I wanted to learn about the benefits and possible drawbacks of one to one instruction and how it has been used in reading interventions.

There have been many reading intervention programmes marketed to schools as being 'research based' and effective. Many of these programmes include teacher guides with step by step instructions that are aimed at 'fixing' students, as if they are broken and in need of repair. In fact, I receive advertisements for various programmes of this ilk almost every week. Skidmore (2000) suggests that these overly structured 'teacher proof' programmes lead to student recitation rather than thinking. Allington (2006) adds that packaged programmes claiming that they have increased achievement in some schools are likely not to have worked in just as many other schools. The lure of these programmes is that they seem to offer a quick fix. Many, however, are not based in best practices. One to one instruction based in best practices, however, has been found to be more effective than whole class or small group instruction for struggling readers, and teachers are the most effective tutors (Brooks, 2002; Slavin *et al*, 2009).

One type of one to one instruction is what Palincsar and Brown (1984) call reciprocal teaching. In this model, first the teacher takes on the teaching role. Both the student and the teacher read a text, then the teacher teaches strategies for comprehending the text. Then they switch roles and the student becomes the teacher. The idea behind

reciprocal teaching is that one cannot teach something that one does not understand oneself. Through the teaching, the student learns. Palincsar and Brown (1984) found that the students involved in reciprocal teaching continued to use the reading strategies they had learned after the intervention had ended. This suggests that reciprocal teaching was effective in teaching the struggling readers to use reading strategies to comprehend and was sustained after the actual lesson input. This is further evidenced by the fact that students' comprehension rose by forty percent (Palincsar and Brown, 1984). They note that simply retesting the students without the reciprocal teaching intervention did not lead to any improvement in comprehension scores.

Reading Recovery

A one to one programme that has been found to be successful is Reading Recovery (Clay, 1979, 1991, 1998; Brooks, 2002; Pinnell, 2003; Reynolds *et al*, 2009; Schwartz *et al*, 2009). Reading Recovery is an intense early reading intervention that is in addition to a child's regular classroom instruction. The programme pays special attention to a child's first two years of literacy instruction and is designed for children who are about seven years old (Clay, 1998). The goal of Reading Recovery is to bring the lowest ten to twenty percent of students to the reading level of their peers until they are able to move out of the programme, usually within 12 to 20 weeks, to prevent adverse effects of poor reading skills, and to keep children open to future literacy learning (Clay, 1991, 1998; Pinnell, 2003). In this model, a Reading Recovery trained teacher works one to one with a struggling reader for twenty to thirty minutes several times a week.

The Reading Recovery sessions are tailored to meet the child's needs and begin by building on what the child already knows (Clay, 1998; Brooks, 2002). Clay (1998)

explains that if we first determine what proficient readers do, we can then teach lower students to do the same. The one to one method of instruction allows the child to learn at an accelerated pace and catch up to the levels of the average students in the class (Ibid).

One of the benefits of Reading Recovery is that the child is doing the work and learns to detect and correct his or her own reading errors (Clay, 1998). The sessions include rereading a familiar book, reading a new book at the child's instructional level, working with letter knowledge, writing, cut-up sentences, and reading a new book (Brooks, 2002; Pinnell, 2003; Slavin *et al*, 2009). Running Records are used to observe and assess student reading throughout the intervention (Clay, 1991). This instruction includes many of the elements of a comprehensive literacy programme such as reading real texts; rereading texts to develop fluency, phonemic awareness, and phonics; and writing. Carson (1999) adds that Reading Recovery focuses on comprehension of texts, integrating writing and reading instruction, student recognition of personal goals, and direct instruction of strategies. She suggests that these elements should be included in all reading programmes. Reynolds and Wheldall (2007), however, argue that Reading Recovery, which was developed in the 1970s has not been updated to include current research, uses mainly a whole language approach to instruction, and lacks emphasis on phonological skills, which Slavin *et al* (2009) found to be especially important for struggling readers.

Reading Recovery was one of the programmes rejected as 'not scientific' by Reading First due to this lack of phonics instruction (Cummings, 2007). Reynolds and Wheldall (2007), while acknowledging that Reading Recovery may currently be the best alternative for a reading intervention, suggest that the benefits of Reading Recovery have

been inflated due to inconsistent reporting methods, citing a success rate varying between 60 to over 80 percent in the United States. They suggest that in Australia only one in three 'ex-Reading Recovery' students achieved average literacy levels in Year 5, and therefore suggest that Reading Recovery has not "achieved its goal of returning students to the average levels of the class and providing them with a self-improving system that will maintain their accelerated rate of progress" (Reynolds and Wheldall, 2007, p. 205). Schwartz *et al* (2009) argue that Reading Recovery effects last through at least the end of second grade, and that in more recent studies than those sited by Reynolds and Wheldall, 85 percent of students who completed the Reading Recovery programme reached average reading levels, and that four years later 60 percent of those students were still achieving this level. They also question what the programme's responsibilities are for maintaining gains made in this early intervention. Clay (1998) suggests that students do retain the gains made in Reading Recovery, although she does not suggest how long these gains last. Reynolds and Wheldall (2007) make a further argument that Reading Recovery does not work for the very lowest students, but Schwartz *et al* (2009) suggest that the bottom 10 to 30 percent of students who do not make gains necessary for completing the programme should receive additional interventions including special education services. They add that the students who do not complete the programme should not be included in ongoing studies of Reading Recovery's effectiveness in maintaining gains.

A final argument Reynolds and Wheldall (2007) made against Reading Recovery was the cost of the programme, citing a 1994 study in which Reading Recovery alone cost as much as 8000 USD per student. Schwartz *et al* (2009) refute this citing the cost as ranging from 1000 to 6000 USD per student, and suggesting that if the total cost of

low reading skills is calculated through age 37, including reduced employment opportunity, increased health risks, and a greater risk of incarceration, then Reading Recovery demonstrates a 15 to 1 return. However, this argument is not valid as there has not been a 30+ year longitudinal study of Reading Recovery, and the programme is generally accepted as being expensive as it requires a school to hire and train a teacher who works with only one child at a time (Brooks, 2002). Clay (1979, p. 149) explained that the one to one model was important because in a larger group, students with reading problems "will become confused or develop false concepts and handicapping strategies". She suggested that small group interventions, based on the specific needs of the students, could be effective with older students (Clay, 1998).

In spite of some of the criticisms, because the elements of Reading Recovery are strong elements of literacy instruction and because of the one to one support provided to struggling readers, Reading Recovery has a high success rate. Pinnell (2003) cites a criterion of ten principles needed for reliable, replicable research, as established by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and explains how Reading Recovery meets these criteria. The first three principles, Phonological Awareness, Visual Perception of Letters, and Word Recognition, are explicitly taught and assessed in Reading Recovery (Pinnell, 2003). These skills are taught through using magnetic letters, creating alphabet books, assembling cut up sentences, writing words, and recognizing words on flash cards (Pinnell, 2003; RRCNA, 2007a). The fourth and fifth principles are Phonics and Decoding Skills and Phonics/ Structural Analysis. Reading Recovery assesses this skill and determines areas for improvement through Running Records and analysis (Pinnell, 2003; RRCNA, 2007a). Students use magnetic letters and

cut up sentences to learn word parts, word clusters, making and breaking words, and to determine unknown words while reading a continuous text (Ibid). The sixth principle, Fluency/ Automaticity, is developed through Reading Recovery lessons because most of the time is spent reading continuous text. Texts that will develop the student's fluency are selected (Pinnell, 2003). Principle seven is Comprehension. Determining if a text makes sense is an important element in Reading Recovery sessions (Clay, 1979; Pinnell, 2003; RRCNA, 2007b). Reading Recovery students are taught to self-monitor and self-correct their reading, work out new words, find cues that aid meaning, use prior knowledge, ask questions, build connections, and to use what they already know to solve words and interpret a story (Pinnell, 2003; RRCNS, 2007b).

The last three principles, related to the format of the intervention, are: a balanced, structured approach, early intervention, and individual tutoring (Pinnell, 2003). By definition, Reading Recovery is a one to one early intervention (Clay 1979, 1991, 1998; Pinnell, 2003). Reading Recovery teachers aim to connect student learning experiences to one another and revisit new learning through several activities during the session (Pinnell, 2003). The programme balances activities and learning through offering a variety of strategies to teach "phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, basic sight words, fluency, and... strategic processing" (Pinnell, 2003 p. 4).

Besides these ten principles, Reading Recovery also develops students' vocabulary. Sessions include attention to word meanings and skills for determining the meaning of unknown words (RRCNA, 2007c). Students are given opportunities to read and reread a variety of texts which help students learn important words, features and patterns of words, and onset and rime (Pinnell, 2007c). Records are kept of the

vocabulary that students know (Ibid). The variety of strategies taught through Reading Recovery and the attention to the many aspects of reading likely have led to the documented successes of Reading Recovery as an early intervention.

Success for All

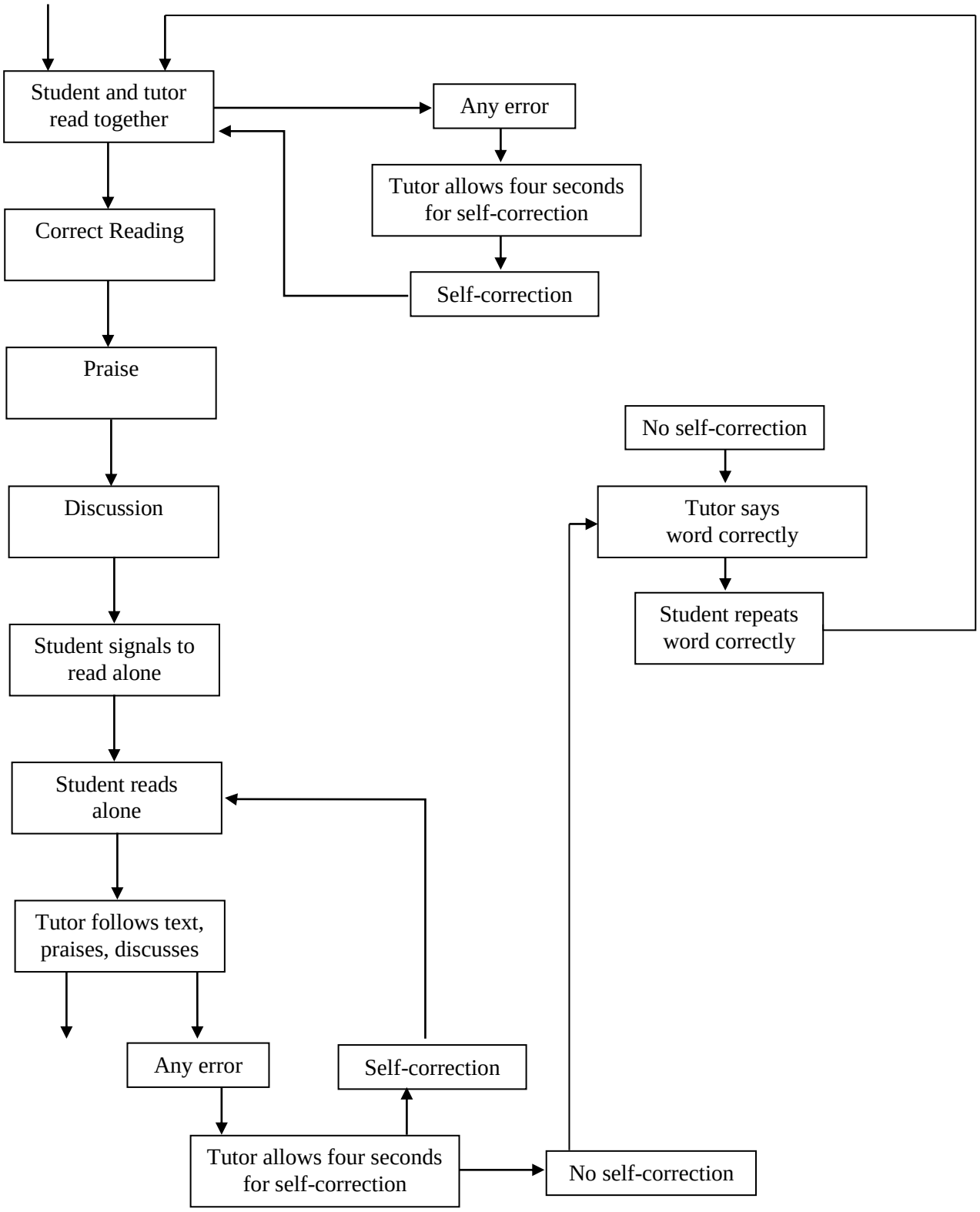
Success for All is a programme that has elements similar to Reading Recovery. It is a preK-grade 5 early intervention that includes one to one tutoring as well as cooperative learning (Slavin *et al,* 2005). Success for All includes cross grade level pull out groups. Like Reading Recovery, Success for All requires a full time facilitator who implements the intervention (Slavin *et al,* 2005). I did not opt to use Success for All for many of the same reasons as Reading Recovery. The age of students the programme is designed for is a drawback, as I wished to work with older students. Like Reading Recovery, Success for All requires a full time facilitator. Because my main role was that of a classroom teacher, this model would not fit into my teaching assignment so I looked for a different approach.

Peer-Tutoring

Peer-assisted learning (PAL), in which students work with their peers to complete classroom tasks, has been found effective in many content areas and has led to a variety of both learning gains and affective gains (Miller *et al*, 2010). Peer-tutoring is a form of PAL in which students are paired so that one partner is more knowledgeable than the other. Tutoring, whether by a teacher, an adult volunteer, or a peer, is generally accepted as effective (Shanahan, 1998). Topping and Lindsay (1992) reviewed 60 small scale and 155 large scale studies of a specific type of peer-tutoring: peer reading. Although many of the studies reviewed did not include a complete description of what the tutors actually

did during tutoring sessions, some consistent trends were found (Ibid). Peer reading tutees improved in accuracy, comprehension, motivation, self-esteem, enjoyment of reading, willingness to read, reading rate, use of context for decoding, and self-correction (Topping and Lindsay, 1992; Miller *et al*, 2010). In several studies, these improvements were noted in the tutors as well (Topping and Lindsay, 1992). In cross age partnerships, the tutors often rethought their own reading competence and changed their own reading processes as a result of peer reading (Miller *et al*, 2010).

The model for peer reading, shown in figure 2 involves the tutor and tutee reading aloud together. When the tutee reads correctly, praise is offered and the text is discussed. The tutee signals when he or she is ready to read alone. If the tutee miscues, the tutor allows four seconds for the tutee to self-correct before providing the correct word, which the tutee repeats. Reading together then continues until the tutee is ready to read alone. This cycle continues throughout the peer reading session.



from Topping and Ehly, 1998, p. 92

Figure 2: Topping's Peer Reading Model

While the one to one ratio of tutor to tutee has been shown to be effective, I question whether the tutor providing the word rather than teaching the tutee word attack strategies was the most effective method. Shegar (2009, p. 135), whose study used a form of peer reading she called 'pause, prompt, praise' suggests that peer-tutoring "may be more effectively tailored to suit different needs". No data were offered by Topping and Lindsay (1992) or Miller *et al*, (2010) as to whether the tutee recognized the miscued word on successive encounters. And Shegar (2009) found, in fact, that after a word was given, tutees often did not recognize it later. While improvements in comprehension, decoding, and use of context were cited by Topping and Lindsay (1992), it is unclear exactly which elements of the peer reading model led to these gains. Miller *et al* (2008), however, found that when teachers actively monitored their students' reading behaviours, student reading achievement increased, and when the teachers gave feedback, the students were more likely to monitor their own reading. It is possible that feedback from a peer could lead to the same active monitoring, and therefore, because of the increased attention to their reading from the tutors, the peer reading method led the tutees to more closely monitor their own reading. This may have lead to the reading gains cited, even though no specific strategies seemed to have been taught. This conjecture cannot be clearly supported, however, because the studies cited (Topping and Lindsay, 1992; Miller *et al*, 2010) did not offer possible explanations for the reading gains made.

Topping and Lindsay's (1992) review of peer reading studies included studies of three types of partnerships: parents as tutors, same age tutors, and cross age tutors. The parent tutoring model is interesting because it occurred in the home, rather than at school. This model included training parents in the peer reading model and home visits to

observe implementation, or listening to recordings of reading sessions. Many of the parent tutor models integrated the peer reading model with pre-existing reading methods (Ibid). However, the parent tutoring model did lead to reading improvements. It is possible that as the parent took on the role of tutor, the reading interactions between the child and the parent became more school-like. Bloome *et al* (2000) found that when parents took on the role of a teacher, such as when they read aloud bedtime stories to the child, this emulated school-type reading and led to reading achievement gains for the child.

Topping and Lindsay (1992) found that training tutors was an important aspect of peer reading, and that closely monitoring pairs was necessary. For this reason, they suggest that in studies with fewer participants and more monitoring, the peer reading technique was followed more closely. Shegar (2009) agreed that training and monitoring tutors was essential. In her study, although peer tutors were trained, monitoring showed that they did not follow the model closely and sessions were unpredictable for the tutee. Only after a second and more extensive training were the tutors able to follow the model. She suggests that training, monitoring, and a checklist of procedures for tutors is essential for peer reading to be successful (Shegar, 2009). Shanahan (1998) agreed that monitoring tutors was essential, and found a direct correlation between the amount of training tutors received and the success of the programme. He also found that without attention to time on task, high quality instruction, and appropriate materials, the tutoring could actually lead to lower achievement.

One cross age study, which included participation from tutors and tutees who were both struggling readers, found that as a result of peer reading both tutors and tutees

increased their use of phonics and visual clues to decode words (Topping and Lindsay, 1992). This finding is especially interesting because this type of instruction specifically does not seem to be an element of the paired reading technique. Another interesting finding, in a study in which tutees were tested one year after peer reading had ended, was that the tutees' errors were reduced and self-corrections had increased since the end of the study (Topping and Lindsay, 1992). This suggests that the changes in reading that occurred as a result of peer reading may have lasted over time, even without continued tutoring. It is unclear from their study how long the tutoring intervention lasted and if the length of the intervention affected the results a year later; Shanahan (1998) suggested that more weeks of tutoring may actually lead to lower overall effects of the tutoring. He suggested that this is because the peer tutors know less than teachers, so there is a ceiling to the progress that can be made. He also points out that a longer programme needs more training and more supervision (Ibid).

In their study of the effects of peer reading on self-esteem, Miller *et al* (2008) found that previous studies were limited because nothing in the methods used specifically measured self-esteem. To measure self-esteem, comprising both self-competence and self-worth, in their study, they used a pre and post Likert scale self-reporting measure. However, Dunne *et al* (2005) question whether the Likert Scale is the most accurate measure. They suggest that quantifying affective responses such as 'strongly agree', 'agree', and 'strongly disagree' on a numerical scale may not lead to an accurate interpretation of attitudes. In Miller's *et al* (2008) study, students were paired in both same age and cross age partnerships and met for a half hour for fifteen weeks. The tutors were trained in the peer reading model and later supported as needed. They found that

peer reading led to gains in self esteem for all tutors. Cross age tutors gained in both feelings of self-competence and self-worth; while same age tutors gained only in feelings of self-competence (Miller *et al*, 2008).

Shanahan (1998) suggests that while peer-tutoring in reading is effective for most students, it is not necessarily more effective than other interventions, and should not replace sound instruction. He also suggests that peer-tutoring is more effective in other content areas, especially math. Marston *et al* (1995) cite one of very few studies that does not recommend peer-tutoring at all. In their study of six different interventions for students with mild disabilities, they found that peer-tutoring led to significantly lower gains than the other five interventions. They suggest that peer-tutoring was not effective because of students' non-academic talk (Ibid). The idea of peer-tutoring as ineffective is not widely supported, however. Studies of over 200 peer reading programmes seem to indicate that, in general, peer reading led to fewer refusals to read, greater confidence, improved fluency, more use of context, improved self-correction, fewer miscues, and an improved use of phonics (Topping and Lindsay, 1992). Although a study of cognitive ability, rather than specifically reading, Topping and Trickey (2007) found that peer collaboration led to learning gains and was especially effective for average and below average students. These findings are encouraging and suggest that peer reading may be an effective method of improving struggling readers' achievement.

Perceptions of Buddy Reading

Buddy Reading is a type of peer-tutoring. Each year since 1996, a survey of literacy leaders in the United States has been conducted to determine what literacy issues are receiving attention. In 2008 a similar survey was completed in the United Kingdom.

In the UK survey, fifty percent of the respondents said that buddy reading programmes was not a "hot", or widely discussed, issue. However, at least seventy five percent of the respondents agreed that buddy reading programmes "should be hot" (Clark, 2008). In the United States, buddy reading programmes have never made the list, although "adolescent literacy" and "struggling readers" were both very hot topics in 2010 and "adolescent literacy" was the hottest topic of 2007 (Cassidy and Wenrich, 1999; Cassidy and Cassidy, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010; Cassidy *et al,* 2006; Cassidy *et al,* 2010). Whether buddy reading currently is hot or not, there is much research to suggest that buddy reading programmes are beneficial.

Peer Buddy Programmes

Many elementary schools have implemented buddy programs of some type. Mathes *et al* (1998) researched a programme called Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies for First Grade Readers (or First-Grade PALS) in which first grade students instructed other first grade students. The programme is based on a structure first developed in the 1970s in which students worked with peers and increased the time they had to focus on academics during the school day in upper elementary grades. Because many of the upper elementary students were not yet reading and therefore not benefiting from the original programme, teachers requested a PALS programme for younger students that would help lower the number of non-readers after first grade.

In the First-Grade PALS programme, students are paired with another student in their classroom and trained in the procedures by the teacher. The procedure for each 35-minute session includes: practice of phonemic awareness and review of mastered phonics skills, making predictions about a book before reading it, shared reading of the book,

repeated exposures to the text, and summarizing of the text (Mathes *et al*, 1998). Although this study was completed before the National Reading Panel study was released, the elements in the First-Grade PALS programme include several of the five pillars of reading recommended by the National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000), including phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, and fluency. Vocabulary may also be addressed as students work on phonics activities. The results of this initial study by Mathes *et al*, (1998, p. 81) suggested that the First-Grade PALS programme was "one feasible tool for accommodating academic diversity in first-grade reading classrooms" and that it increased "students' engagement in the actual act of reading".

In 2003, Mathes *et al* conducted another study comparing the PALS programme to a small-group teacher-directed approach to instruction and the results of each programme on struggling readers. The results of the study suggested, not surprisingly, that the teacher-directed small group instruction promoted reading growth in struggling readers more effectively than peer instruction. However, the peer instruction was also effective in promoting reading growth. As a result, Mathes *et al* (2003) recommended that teachers continue small group instruction, but that PALS be included as a part of reading instruction so that all students increase weekly practice in reading skills.

These studies both suggest that when teachers are directly involved, peer buddy reading programmes can be effective when 1) students are trained on procedures and 2) the programme is one part of a reading programme. Are cross-age level buddy reading programmes as effective?

Cross-Age Level Buddy Programmes

In a study of a cross-age writing buddy programme, Paquette (2008, p. 182) cites some of the benefits of any cross-age tutoring programme: a one to one ratio, maximized participation of the tutee, modelling of ideas, effective communication, an ability of students close in age to "talk the same language", increased motivation, and a development of leadership skills in the tutors. Some or all of these benefits were cited in each of the programmes discussed below.

Wright and Cleary (2006) built upon the research of the PALS programme to research a cross-age peer-tutoring programme. Their programme focused specifically on the fluency development of the tutors and the tutees using a strategy called "listening-while-reading". In this strategy, the less-skilled reader or tutee follows along as the more-skilled reader or tutor reads a passage aloud. Then the tutee reads the passage aloud as the tutor provides help when needed. Believing that older students would be stronger readers, tutors were students in third and fourth grades, while the tutees were students in second and third grades. The study found that the fluency rate of the struggling readers increased at a rate of about one word per week.

Although this study does suggest that this cross-age level buddy programme was effective, I question the value of it. While fluency is one of the pillars of literacy, it is only one pillar. Fluent reading does not necessarily equate to comprehension. An increase in reading rate can lead to comprehension but this did not seem to be addressed in this study. A more comprehensive buddy programme may be more effective to the overall reading ability of participating students.

In another cross-age level buddy reading programme, Friedland and Truesdell (2006, p. 36) suggest that "students… will persist in reading activities if they are successful", and therefore teachers must create daily opportunities for the reading success of their students. Fostering self-efficacy, the belief that one can accomplish a task, was the goal behind Friedland and Truesdell's buddy reading programme. In their programme, students in sixth and seventh grades with learning disabilities were paired with second graders. Before each weekly session, the older students practised the books they were going to read to their buddies. This practice helped them develop fluency. Students believed they "read better (more fluently) because of the opportunity to read aloud and practise" (Friedland and Truesdell, 2006, p. 40). Comprehension was not a focus of this study, although one student did suggest that she comprehended better as a result of the programme. Friedland and Truesdell suggest that the self-efficacy of their students with learning disabilities did improve as a result of participating in the buddy reading programme.

Like the study by Wright and Cleary (2006), Friedland and Truesdell (2006) focus only on one area of reading, that of self-efficacy. Although self-efficacy and motivation are essential elements of effective reading, they are not one of the five pillars defined by the National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000), but rather a mostly undefined idea that runs through literacy instruction. Friedland and Truesdell (2006) do cite an improvement in fluency as a result of repeated readings, as reported by student self-evaluations and teacher observations, but they intentionally did not look for an improvement in the reading skills of the students they worked with. This seems to be an important outcome that was overlooked in this study.

Other studies of buddy programmes have demonstrated an improvement in students' spelling skills (Caserta-Henry, 1996), comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and writing (Fisher, 2001). Fisher (2001, p. 239) noted that students' reading improved because in addition to the buddy programme, students received "quality literacy instruction", "authentic literacy experiences", and "regular feedback" and that these elements "seem to be key factors in assisting struggling adolescent readers". Quality instruction is essential to the reading achievement of struggling readers. These elements of quality literacy instruction guided me as I developed the Buddy Reading Programme for my research study. As I planned the Buddy Reading Programme, it was not enough to focus on only one element of literacy, such as fluency, spelling, or self-efficacy. Rather, I wanted to develop and improve the overall 'real reading' skills of the students who participated. This required that the programme include all of the elements of comprehensive balanced reading instruction, rather than only one or two elements. While there were positive outcomes to each of the other studies I read, none seemed to delve deep enough into the development of real readers. Developing real readers was the goal of my study.

University-Based Buddy Reading Programmes

A fairly common type of buddy reading programme is one in which university students partner with a local school. This type of programme gives university students the opportunity to try out the things they are learning and benefits the younger students at the same time. One such programme is a Book Buddies programme in which graduate students partnered with eight and nine years olds who had been identified as at-risk of reading failure (Bromley *et al,* 1994). The elementary students identified for Book

Buddies worked in small groups with a reading teacher three times a week for 45 minutes and completed the Book Buddies programme during one of the weekly sessions for ten weeks. This programme used dialogue journals between the elementary students and the graduate student buddies in which the children created a web of story elements for the stories they read and wrote notes to their buddies.

The attitudes of the elementary students improved as a result of participating in the Book Buddies programme, as measured by pre and post tests of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey and according to classroom teachers, the students in the programme were more excited about reading and writing activities, and read and finished books during silent reading time – something they had not done before the programme.

While Bromley *et al*, (1994) reported positive results from their programme, I question whether it would have been more effective if the elementary and university Book Buddies had actually met. This programme was perhaps developed to be of more benefit to the graduate students who were learning about working with struggling readers. While there are benefits of a pen-pal type programme, many students crave the one to one attention that comes from regular, face to face meetings. The main focus of this study seems to be on the reading attitudes of the students involved, and while this is an important consideration, perhaps it should not be the primary goal of a reading programme. The benefits that come from reading aloud, collaborative talk, and joint understandings of texts were all lost as a result of the format of this programme.

In contrast to this study, Good and Ley (2002) discuss a buddy reading programme in which struggling readers at the collegiate level read to elementary students. The study is focused on the university students who were enrolled in a

developmental reading class. As part of the class, the students learned to use reading strategies which they then taught to elementary students. Good and Ley (2002) suggest that buddy programmes can benefit both the older and the younger readers. Because the classroom instruction focused on reading strategies and improving reading comprehension, the programme was effective for the university students. This study suggests that even older students can be taught to read and comprehend more effectively through peer or collaborative working. Like the programme I developed, this programme uses a reciprocal teaching model which was effective for both the university students and the elementary students. This suggests that instruction in reading strategies and in reciprocal teaching methods is beneficial beyond the elementary years and seems to support the methods of instruction used in my study.

A similar programme was developed by Connie Juel at the University of Texas at Austin (Wasik, 1998). In Juel's programme, at-risk college students tutored at-risk first graders one to one. While the results of Juel's programme were not as successful as she had hoped, several behaviours were observed in the more successful partnerships. These behaviours included: scaffolding and modelling of reading and writing, completing specific activities, direct letter-sound instruction, modelling step by step how to work out words, more time reading texts, and more time writing. The less successful buddies spent less time scaffolding activities. Often the child drew a picture while the mentor wrote the story. Therefore, the younger student spent less time reading and writing (Wasik, 1998). This suggests that simply pairing older and younger people together does not automatically lead to an improvement in reading skills, but that the meetings must be intentionally focused on literacy. As a result, planning the activities that students would

be engaged in during their meeting times was a focus of my planning and of my training of students.

While one university study focused on the college students and the other focused on the elementary students, both studies with university students demonstrated that university-elementary school buddy programmes can be effective. This suggests that cross-age buddy programmes, when effective training has occurred, can benefit both older and younger students. Using these studies I planned the training sessions for the middle school students and the adult mentors involved in the Buddy Reading Programme and planned how the meeting times would most effectively meet the needs of the students.

Adult and Family Partnerships

The final type of buddy reading programme I will address is an adult or family partnership. In this type of programme an adult volunteer from the community or a family member serves as the reading mentor and this is nearer to the programme I eventually developed.

Wasik (1998) studied the Book Buddies programme developed by the McGuffey Reading Center at the University of Virginia. The designers of the programme argued that volunteers could be trained to help at-risk children read. The components of the programme were similar to the components of Reading Recovery. Meier and Invernizzi (1999) studied the effectiveness of the Book Buddies programme when replicated in an urban setting. They found that students who participated in Book Buddies for at least forty sessions showed significant improvement in reading skills. The programme, they concluded, was both possible and effective. However, Meier and Invernizzi (1999) point

out that the Book Buddy programme alone did not advance students past the preprimer reading level. They suggest that quality, early intervention programmes need to be implemented in conjunction with quality classroom instruction. This study does, however, support the use of adult volunteers with struggling first graders in high-poverty schools. A question that still needs to be addressed is whether adult volunteers can be effective with older struggling readers.

Between 1998 and 2004, over 2500 volunteers served as buddy readers in Derbyshire, United Kingdom (Taylor, 2004). Taylor suggests that in ten weeks, Year 6 students in the reading programme made average gains of as much as 14.18 months. While Taylor discussed many of the affective benefits of using volunteers in school reading programmes, little information was given as to how the programme was run, how volunteers were trained, what was included in the buddy sessions, or the quantitative results of the programmes. However, it does suggest that using volunteer mentors may be effective in raising the reading scores of struggling readers in a short period of time. The mentoring programme may have been effective because of the one to one nature of the programme, the relationships developed through the programme, or because of the greater knowledge of the mentors. As I developed my Buddy Reading Programme, I considered using adult volunteers to help the middle school students make greater gains in their reading than they might have from working with their buddies alone.

Wasik (1998), however, suggests that volunteer tutoring programmes are not as effective as one to one tutoring programmes in which certified teachers serve as the tutors. She cites Reading Recovery and Success for All programmes as the most effective reading intervention programmes. Although it is true that Reading Recovery

has been found to be highly effective, it cannot reasonably be compared to programmes in which volunteers or other students serve as mentors, rather than teachers. Wasik (1998) reviewed more than ten programmes that use adults as tutors, focus on reading, and focus on students in kindergarten through third grade, most of which were programmes that have been implemented on small scale with little evaluation. Although it is generally accepted that one to one mentoring is effective, Wasik suggests that few of the programmes she reviewed provided solid evidence of these benefits.

Components of Effective Buddy Reading Programmes

Several components of effective buddy reading and mentoring programmes did come to light through Wasik's (1998) work, however, as well as from the other studies. First, the more effective programmes had a coordinator who was knowledgeable about reading and reading instruction. Second, the effective programmes all included basic components that are part of the Reading Recovery programme: rereading a familiar book, reading a new book, word work, and writing. Further, the effective mentors spent more time having their buddy read books with familiar vocabulary and directly teaching letter-sound relationships (Wasik, 1998, p. 282). The third element of the successful programmes that Wasik (1998) identified, which has become evident in the review of all of the buddy programmes, is training of the mentors. Whether the mentors are peers, older students, or adults, training mentors is essential to a successful programme. Mentoring another in reading is not instinctive for most people.

Schmidt (Theurer and Schmidt, 2008) teaches her fifth grade mentors how to prepare to read a book to their younger buddies by describing how she prepares for a read aloud. She teaches mentors to preview the book by reading it aloud with fluency and

expression (Friedland and Truesdell, 2004; Theurer and Schmidt, 2008) and to determine in advance some good places to stop and talk about the book. When training her fifth graders, she models choosing places to stop. When working with the buddy, Schmidt says, "read the title of the book and ask the buddy to make a prediction" (Ibid, p. 261). This supports Zhang and Hoosain's (2001) suggestion that focusing on the title of a text can lead to comprehension.

Mentors need to be trained in how to help their buddies work out unknown words (Theurer and Schmidt, 2008). Proficient readers rarely stumble over words and have forgotten the strategies they used when they were younger. Simply telling the younger buddy the word is not effective for teaching them. Some strategies for figuring out an unknown word are sounding it out, looking for a smaller word or base word, separating the ending, chunking the word, asking if the attempted word makes sense, reading on, using the picture to work out a word, or finding a place in the text where the word was already used and going back to that sentence (Ibid). After the tricky word has been determined, Schmidt reminds her students to have their buddy reread the whole sentence so the text makes sense.

Some basic elements of working with someone younger need to be addressed during training. *How* they will read together should be addressed (Theurer and Schmidt, 2008). Whether they take turns reading a page, read different books to each other, or read together in unison should be considered. Teaching mentors to sit next to their buddy rather than across from them, so both can see the words, is a basic part of training. Deciding who holds the book should also be considered by pairs (Ibid). Other elements included in the training are where and how to store materials, how to check out books,

and where to take their buddy to read (Friedland and Truesdell, 2004). Schmidt role plays with her students to help them work out what to do when their buddy is not listening, not cooperating, or not behaving. An important part of training includes teaching the older student how to complete a log each week (Friedland and Truesdell, 2004; Theurer and Schmidt, 2008). Teaching mentors where to find materials and how to use them is essential to a successful buddy reading programme (Theurer and Schmidt, 2008). Follow-up activities to the reading may include word activities or comprehension games. Mentors should be trained to use these materials.

The final similarity of mentor and buddy programmes identified by Wasik (1998), although not a mark of effectiveness, was the lack of coordination between the volunteer programmes and classroom instruction. She suggests that coordinating mentoring and classroom instruction would be of more benefit to the student, although this is not possible is all cases.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Paradigms

When determining the best methodology and methods for research, there are many paradigms to choose from. This decision, according to Hammersley (1993, p. 43), should not depend on an "ideological commitment to one methodological paradigm or another" but rather "should depend on the nature of what we are trying to describe, on the likely accuracy of our descriptions, on our purposes, and on the resources available to us". With this in mind, I will not hold slavishly to one particular paradigm, but draw on different paradigms that will best improve my personal practices and research in general (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995).

As I considered the various theories and paradigms of research, I realized that action research regularly influences my instruction within my classroom. I am continually evaluating my students' learning, looking for better ways to approach instruction, and to improve student learning, and evaluating the results. This is supported by Bassey (1999, p. 41) who says, "teachers…who are trying to make beneficial change within their own workplace" are action researchers. Although the majority of the research I have done thus far in my teaching career has been informal, because the goal is to effect change, it fits within the constructs of action research which is defined and discussed below. Bassey (1999, p. 40) describes three types of empirical research: "theoretical research with the goal to understand;" evaluative research, with the goal to understand and evaluate;" and "action research, with the goal to understand, evaluate, and change". Based on my research questions, because I am directly involved with the context of my research, and because my goal is change, my work draws on aspects of

action research (Altrichter *et al,* 1993; Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995; Robson, 2002) within the constructivist model (Graesser *et al,* 1994; DeVries and Zan, 1996; Fosnot, 1996a, 1996b; Gould, 1996; Robson, 2002; Creswell, 2003).

Action Research

My research study draws on aspects of action research, which is an influential approach within social research because it initiates change through the research process (Robson, 2002). Action research became a popular research paradigm in the late 1970s and early 1980s because it enabled teachers to participate in their own research and to transform the professional culture (Elliott, 1991; McNiff, 1993). Elliott (1991, p. 69) defines action research as "the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within in". Initially drawing on the philosophical underpinnings of Lewin (eg. Lewin, 1946), the Universities of East Anglia and Bath developed the methodology to help teachers understand their own teaching practices and to guide them through research enquiries (McNiff, 1993). The definition has broadened to include research conducted by any practitioners in the field, with a focus on problem-solving and change (Thomas, 2009). Kemmis (1993) adds that action research is self-reflective and leads to an understanding of practices and of situations. Throughout this study, my goal was to solve the problem of struggling readers within my school and to bring about a change in their instruction. This required a great deal of reflection. Learning to understand why some readers struggled more than others and the specific types of reading problems they faced allowed me to work toward finding solutions. Action researchers are directly concerned with the situation in which they are researching (Altrichter *et al*, 1993). Because the researcher is directly involved in the situation, a

principal aspect of action research is cooperation between the researcher and the participants (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). Action research involves continuing effort, reflecting, and looking for new options in order to improve a social situation. The goal of action research is change within an organization (Robson, 2002).

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p. 28) explain the cyclical approach of action research as "identification of a problem, collecting information, analysing, planning action or intervention, and implementing and monitoring outcomes". Kemmis (1993) adds that action researchers must formulate and articulate theories as part of this cyclical approach, and that evaluation should take place at each step. Altrichter *et al* (1993) point out that an immediate solution to the problem should not be expected.

Elliot (1991) defines five steps of action research that, while compatible with, are slightly different from Hitchcock and Hughes' model. Step 1 is *Identifying and clarifying the general idea*. In this step, it must be considered "whether the situation… is something one would like to change or improve" and "the extent to which one is able to change or improve on it" (Elliot, 1991, p. 72). Step 2 is *Reconnaissance* in which the researcher must describe the situation and clarify the problem, move into a critical analysis of the setting, and gather evidence to test the hypothesis. In step 3, *Constructing the general plan*, the researcher will revise the general idea formed in step 1 based on the information gathered in step 2. Then the researcher will conduct any necessary negotiations for undertaking action, define necessary resources, and consider the ethics involved in the research. While conducting negotiations, Elliot (1991, p. 75) recommends that the researcher conduct the "initial action steps… within areas where [they] have the maximum freedom of decision". In my case, these steps involved

identifying the problem of struggling readers within my school and hypothesizing that a Buddy Reading Programme might help this problem. Because I am an insider researcher and identified this problem within my school, I imposed the Buddy Reading Programme as an intervention, rather than the intervention being generated from the outside. To do this, I began working with the principal and others in the school to plan the programme, identify students, and work out ethical considerations. In Step 4, *Developing the next action steps*, the researcher decides which steps to implement, when to implement, how to implement, and how the steps will be evaluated. Elliott (1991) suggests using a range of research techniques and reminds the researcher to record both intended and unintended results. Finally, Elliott (1991) recommends implementing the next action steps. Step 5 includes *Monitoring*, more reconnaissance, determining what needs to be done, and making modifications (Ibid). As I worked with the first grade teacher, we planned how the programme would be set up, I took necessary steps for this, and kept careful records throughout the programme.

Culture is an important consideration in action research. According to Fosnot (1996b, p. 24), "we cannot understand an individual's cognitive structure without observing it interacting in a context, within a culture". This makes a school an ideal setting for action research. Students in school are in a specific context with defined cultural norms. Action research "demands that the researcher should examine his own practice and educational development, rather than anyone else's" (Eames, 1993, p. 71). Elliott (1991) explains that the aim of action research is to improve practice. It is this goal of improved practice that makes schools a prime setting for action research.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p. 30) point out that "action research can fall prey to criticisms of 'soft science'". Theories are validated through practice, rather than validated independently and then applied to practice; and the researcher is not in a position of detachment from the research (Elliott, 1991). However, if we keep in mind that the purpose of action research is to "improve practice rather than produce knowledge" (Elliott, 1991, p. 49) the criticism of "soft science" seems not to be valid. Action research allows teachers to "follow a certain action-reflection procedure that will allow them to improve an unsatisfactory situation" (McNiff, 1993, p. 14). Action research follows a 'bottom up' rather than a 'top down' process of change (Elliott, 1991). As teachers, a goal must be to improve practice, and therefore learning, for students. By implementing action research, a classroom teacher can do just this (Elliott, 1991; Eames, 1993).

Dunne *et al* (2005, p. 13) warn of issues of power within research that are "inextricably a part of knowledge and [flow] universally through our discursive exchanges". A teacher conducting action research, or any other type of research, must be aware of the power issues between herself and the subjects (in this case, students) in the study. As a teacher, she is in a position of power over the students, which could affect student responses to qualitative methods of research. While these issues are real and must be considered, they do not negate the value of action research as a methodology for research. Power will be addressed later in this chapter.

One criticism of action research is that it does not lead to theory. J. Thomas (2007) suggests that there is a perceived need for social research to be generalizable. However, she argues that a lack of general principles does not necessarily indicate

subjectivity. In other words, if the goal of action research is to effect change within a specific situation, the results of the research may not necessarily apply to other situations. Schofield (1993) points out that generalizability is not the purpose of this type of research. However, he continues, strong description is essential.

The Interpretive Approach

The interpretive approach is reflected in some of the qualitative approaches I want to consider, such as thick description, in which the researcher observes, records, and interprets actions in order to more deeply understand what has occurred (Geertz, 1973). For example, the data collection is based on field notes, diaries, transcripts, and conversations (Bassey, 1999), and approaches in this paradigm look at the experience of the research participants subjectively (Robson, 2002). Maxwell (2002) suggests that the researcher may need to infer information based on what the participants say and do. This was certainly the case in my observations of students, as I sometimes had to infer what was happening in their heads as they read or discussed a particular passage of text. Maxwell (2002) explains that the interpretative approach examines data based on the perspective of the participants in the study, rather than the perspective of the researcher. The idea that "reality is seen as a construct of the human mind" (Robson, 2002, p. 43) leaves too much open to interpretation. Likewise, interpreting data based solely on the perspective of twelve to fourteen year old students may not give a complete picture of the phenomenon. Because information and actions can be interpreted differently, I felt that it was important to include several types of field notes in my study. Therefore, I drew on the interpretative approach for qualitative aspects of my research and wrote thick descriptions as I observed students and interpreted their actions.

Constructivist Research

A final research paradigm that I will address is the constructivist model. In the classroom, a constructivist teacher builds upon the knowledge students already possess. She allows students "to struggle with issues", rather than "rely on adults" for answers (DeVries and Zan, 1996, p. 115). Gould (1996, p. 101) writes that constructivist teachers "seek to support learning, not control it". In this model of teaching, students begin to ask their own questions, reflect on their learning, search for patterns, stretch from where they were, and are challenged to go farther in their learning, and to learn things that will help them in another situation or on another day (Fosnot, 1996b; Gould, 1996; Glaserfeld, 1996). As students struggle to construct knowledge, they become independent learners.

Likewise, within a constructivist approach to research, knowledge and understanding are built over time. The approach is participant-centred and individualized. The constructivist researcher's goal is to "focus on learners' needs, to examine their emerging 'big ideas', and to help them construct new concepts" (Cowey, 1996, p. 170). A constructivist researcher aims to describe how learning occurs and to create an understanding of the specific new knowledge. The results of constructivist research are often 'multi-voiced' as the researcher and the participants work together (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The field diaries, especially, aided me in this aspect of the research.

The constructivist paradigm of research fits well within the school setting because it is socially constructed (Robson, 2002), and the context of the school provides for specific social norms. DeVries and Zan (1996, p. 103) state that establishing "a sociomoral atmosphere" is the first principle of constructivist research and that a feeling

of community should be developed. Developing a community of learning is important to constructivist research because the researcher and the participants work together and the findings are constructed through the research process. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that at times a constructivist researcher's findings may seem to contradict one another, but because the knowledge is created by the researcher and the participants over time, conclusions may change and develop. And just as deeper knowledge is valued in the constructivist classroom, "concept development and deep understanding are the focus of the constructivist view" (Fosnot, 1996b, p. 10). Because of the cooperation between the researcher and the participants and because of the desire to develop greater understandings over time, the constructivist paradigm fits the goals of my research.

Research Design

Qualitative and Quantitative Design

The question of using a qualitative or quantitative research design rests on the research questions asked and the type of data that will be used. Typically, social research includes more qualitative methods, which are used to develop interpretations (Dunne *et al,* 2005). Qualitative research is "based primarily on constructivist perspectives" (Creswell, 2003, p. 18) and "seeks to describe and explain both perspectives and behaviours" (Hammersley, 1993, p. 45). Qualitative analysis is on a "case by case basis" (Brannen, 1993, p. 9). Qualitative research "is concerned with attitudes rather than simply with behaviour" (Hammersley, 1993, p. 45), and "primarily uses post-positivist claims for developing knowledge" (Creswell, 2003, p. 18), while quantitative methods are typically associated with more scientific and statistical studies (Dunne *et al,* 2005).

According to Hammersley (1993, p. 52), "the prevalence of the distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods tends to obscure the complexity of the problems that face us and threatens to render our decisions less effective than they might otherwise be". Bryman (1993, p. 68) states that a mixed-methods approach, "is more likely to contain a component that will appeal to organizations to which access is sought". According to G. Thomas (2009), a mixed-method design is natural because different research questions need different methods. Sammons (forthcoming) adds that mixed-methods enhance research and go beyond what quantitative or qualitative methods alone could do. Keeping these ideas in mind, this study will use a Mixed-Methods approach: a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods within a single study. The purpose for this is twofold. First, the potential to triangulate the data: student and mentor responses, observations, surveys, interviews, student vignettes, photographs, (qualitative) and miscue analyses, reading rates, and test scores (quantitative), helps to provide more substantial and trustworthy evidence to support the conclusions of this study (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995; Creswell, 2003). Second, because today's educational climate places a heavy emphasis on test scores and achievement, to not address these quantitative aspects would lack the types of evidence that educational policy makers require and thereby minimise the potential impact of the study. However, to design an entirely quantitative study would ignore the human aspects of education and the individual learning that I wish to address through this research. By working with the students and mentors, my ultimate goal is to effect change and overall improvement in the reading lives of the students involved in the research study (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995; Robson, 2002).

Data Analysis

Because I collected data from multiple data sources, triangulation was possible. Elliott (1991, p. 82) describes triangulation as "not so much a technique for monitoring, as a more general method for bringing different kinds of evidence into some relationship with each other so that they can be compared and contrasted". This triangulation "provides stronger substantiation of constructs and hypotheses" (Eisenhardt, 2002 p. 14) and makes the study more trustworthy (Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Sammons, forthcoming). The value of triangulation for establishing the trustworthiness of findings and enhancing the rigor of the research is well documented (Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Bryman, 1993; Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995; Robson, 2002).

Eisenhardt (2002 p. 17-20) gives many suggestions for the analysis of case studies: pair cases and look for similarities and differences between the cases, group the cases and look for "within group similarities" and "intergroup differences", and she suggests that the researchers should "go beyond initial impressions". "It makes sense to choose cases such as extreme situation and polar types in which the process of interest is transparently observable" (Ibid, p. 12-13). In my research, I was able to compare the effects of the Buddy Reading Programme on individual students, as well as on the group of participants as a whole. As I analyzed data, I was not comparing multiple 'cases', as Eisenhardt (2002) suggests, because I worked with only one group of students at one school. However, I did find some common threads between the experiences of the individual students who participated in the study. From the analysis of data, the goal is to create a theory. Eisenhardt (2002) cautions the researcher to keep the theory simple, determine the most important relationships, and avoid narrow or premature theory. "The

danger is the investigators reach premature and even false conclusions as a result of these information-processing biases. Thus, the key to good cross-case comparison is counteracting these tendencies by looking at the data in many divergent ways" (Ibid, p. 18). J. Thomas (2007) argues that the term "theory" is used in so many ways that it has become almost meaningless. She suggests that there are two kinds of theory: a set of statements that can be proved or disproved through empirical research and theory that is a "tool for thinking" (Ibid, p. 101). "Reasonability" and "plausibility" do not theory make, she cautions (Ibid, p. 105-106). This leads to the idea of fittingness contrasted with generalizability (Schofield, 1993), which suggests that generalizablity may be unimportant or unachievable in qualitative research and therefore it is difficult to produce theory. However J. Thomas (2007) argues that while theory does not fit easily into qualitative research, it is necessary. G. Thomas (2009) offers the idea of constant comparison, in which the researcher goes through the data, compares the elements, and finds themes. These themes, he suggests lead the researcher to draw conclusions.

Lincoln and Guba (1986, p. 75) suggest that because "human behaviour is time and context bound" 'trustworthiness' is a more appropriate term than 'reliability' or 'validity'. Trustworthiness, they suggest, can be established through lengthy contact with the participants, in depth observation, triangulation of data, thick descriptions, in which behaviours are described and made clearer, and an audit trail of all data, in which all steps of the research process are clear.

When using multiple sources of data, finding conflicting data is common. One difficulty researchers face is "knowing what a conflict in results actually comprises. It is fairly rare for one set of findings to confirm the other set in their entirety" (Bryman,

1993, p. 65). "Contradictions… need to be illuminated, explored, and discussed" (Fosnot, 1996b, p. 29) and be considered "suggestive of new lines of enquiry" (Bryman, 1993, p. 64).

Because I used so many different sources of data: research diaries, interviews, surveys, photos, test scores, and record sheets, I anticipated that some of the data would be in conflict. However, the research suggests that these conflicts should not necessarily be seen as a problem. Robson (2002) suggests that a final research report should include problems, micro-politics, and conflicts, in addition to the final results and theory. Acknowledging these conflicts makes the research more trustworthy. To help support the trustworthiness of my data analysis, the data collected was triangulated using several coding systems which will be described in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Methods

Developing and Implementing an Effective Buddy Reading Programme

Planning the Programme

Based on the information in my literature review, I planned a Buddy Reading Programme for struggling 7th and 8th grade students in my school. The most effective buddy programmes have been found to have coordinator who oversees the programme (Wasik, 1998). Within my study, I served as this coordinator, in addition to my role as the researcher. As I coordinated the programme I was also able to make adjustments when I found things that did not work well, needed further instruction, or could be modified to become more effective.

Friedland and Truesdell (2004, 2006) suggest several tips for implementing a Buddy Reading Programme. First, there must be a commitment from the teachers, students, and administrators for the programme to be effective (2006). This commitment from others first required a commitment and planning on my part. For my research study, I began reconnaissance and planning the Buddy Reading Programme in February before I actually implemented it the following October. In the early stages, I wrote a proposal requesting permission to begin the programme, time in the school day to work on it, and permission to take students out of their classes periodically to participate in the programme, and submitted it to my school principal. He initially gave verbal approval for the program, but it was September, about a month into the school year, before all the scheduling issues were actually in place. The administration at my school was willing to allow me to implement a Buddy Reading Programme and supported the idea of it, but

with little administrative involvement. This allowed me freedom to pursue the programme with few obstacles.

The next task that Friedland and Truesdell (2006) recommend is finding committed students. In this case, middle school students. The information on other peer-tutoring programmes informed me in this process. It would have been easy to just choose students in my classroom. I saw them every day. I knew that they were receiving effective reading instruction on a daily basis, and I knew I would see their reading improve during the school year. However, I wanted the programme to help fill a gap within my school; so, I began contacting the three other seventh and eighth grade English and language arts teachers for their suggestions of students who would benefit from the programme. From their suggestions, I generated a list of about twenty-two students: 13 girls and 9 boys, and a mixture of white, African American, and Hispanic.

I planned a meeting to invite these twenty-two students to participate, in which I told them about the Buddy Reading Programme and invited them to ask questions. Each student was provided with a form to complete to provide informed consent. After securing informed consent for the sixteen middle school students who chose to participate in the Buddy Reading Programme, I began implementing the programme. During the second semester, one student dropped out, leaving fifteen who participated in the year-long programme.

The next planning task was to find an elementary teacher who would be committed to the programme. I wanted to work with a first grade teacher because children's reading develops so quickly at this age, as explained by Ehri (1999). Friedland and Truesdell (2004, 2006) suggest that students should be in different enough grade

levels to provide "the feeling of a mentoring experience" (2004 p.77). Partnering students in first grade with students in seventh or eighth grade addressed this. I worked with a district literacy coach to find a first grade teacher with whom to partner.

The first grade class included sixteen students when the programme began in October which was perfect for one to one pairing of students. Although some first grade students moved away and others moved in, for the most part the partnerships were consistent throughout the year, which is an important factor in developing relationships (Friedland and Truesdell, 2004). Although it is suggested that same-gender pairings work best (Ibid), this was not always possible.

The final commitment I needed to secure was from adult mentors. This proved to be the biggest challenge. I contacted the school's PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization), community groups, and retired teachers to find mentors. While at different times throughout the year I had enough adult mentors for all of the students, only mentors for about half of the students were consistent. In the future, I would partner with a local church or civic group to find committed adult mentors for each student.

Using a Reading Recovery Model

Informed by my literature review, I believe that Reading Recovery is an effective method of one to one instruction (Clay, 1979, 1991, 1998; Pinnell, 2003). Therefore I decided to utilize some Reading Recovery strategies in my programme. Although I did draw on some instructional elements of Reading Recovery, I did not choose to simply use the Reading Recovery format in my study for several reasons. First, Reading Recovery was designed for young students, beginning in first grade. Because my students are adolescents, this format would not be developmentally appropriate for them and they

would likely be unwilling to participate in this type of programme. Second, the Reading Recovery model requires that all participants are taught one to one by a trained teacher. This would greatly limit the number of middle school students who could participate in the reading instruction. Instead, I taught the middle school students Reading Recovery strategies, such as reading and rereading texts, creating alphabet books with their buddies, using magnetic and foam letters to build words, flash cards of high frequency words, writing strategies, and cut up sentences (Clay, 1979, 1991, 1998; Pinnell, 2003). However, I taught them these strategies in order for them to use the strategies with their first grade buddies.

Clay (1998, p. 215) suggested that there are no promising programmes for older struggling readers. She argued that Reading Recovery teachers could "develop literacy skills in many of the children in longer-term programmes" but Reading Recovery was developed for seven year olds. Because the Reading Recovery strategies are effective, I believed they might be beneficial for my older students. By teaching the middle schoolstudents many Reading Recovery strategies and to reciprocally teach these strategies to their elementary buddies, the students gained the benefits of reciprocal teaching and more students could participate in the programme than if the students worked with a trained teacher. I also chose to include more phonics instruction in my programme than are part of Reading Recovery. A final reason I chose not to use Reading Recovery exclusively is that Reading Recovery requires specific training in the programme and a specific type of record-keeping. Although I am familiar with many Reading Recovery strategies, I have not had the training and it is unlikely that my school would be willing to train me in a primary grades intervention model. Also, the type of

record-keeping that is essential to Reading Recovery does not meet the specific goals I had for my programme. However, using Reading Recovery strategies allowed the middle school students and their buddies to reap some of the benefits of this programme.

Training and Record Keeping

Strong training was also an element in the effective programmes (Wasik, 1998). The information on other peer-reading programmes informed me in the process of training. As I trained middle school students to work with their first grade buddies, I trained them in using the components of Reading Recovery, and their sessions with the first graders revolved around these components: reading familiar texts, reading new texts, working with letters and words, writing, and assembling cut-up sentences (Pinnell, 2003). I trained the adult mentors to use the same components, but at a higher level, in their work with the middle school students.

As I trained the students and adults in my research study, I found teaching methods for word identification, as suggested by Theurer and Schmidt (2008), especially valuable because both the students and the adults were not sure how to help identify unknown words. The middle school students often needed to be reminded of some strategies for helping their buddies work out unknown words, and I modelled using these strategies with their buddies when the buddies were stuck. I also found that both the adult mentors and the middle school students needed ideas for getting their buddy back on track, such as learning how to refocus on the text, stopping periodically to discuss the text, or working out how to sit so both partners can read one text, as suggested by Theurer and Schmidt (2008).

Record keeping was important in both the buddy and the mentor components of the study. As suggested by Friedland and Truesdell (2004), I found that a log helped my middle school students stay focused as they were working with their buddy and helped me respond to any problems they faced. The format of the log was revised during the year to better meet the students' needs; however the basic elements remained the same. The log served as a record of their work together and as a way for me to respond individually to each student. The adult mentors also kept a log, but in a different format. Instead of a form to complete, the adults had a notebook in which to record their activities, write notes to me, and for me to respond. Because I was typically teaching a class when the adult mentors were working with the middle school students, I was rarely able to observe their sessions. The notebook was an essential tool for communicating with the adult mentors.

As follow-up activities, I included several hands-on manipulatives and games middle school students could use with their first grade buddies and trained the middle school students to use each. For more specific information on training the adult mentors and the students in this research study, see Appendix A.

Coordinating Instruction

Wasik (1998) suggests that the most effective programmes are ones in which the programme is coordinated with classroom instruction. Within my research study, there was some coordination of instruction. The first grade teacher I partnered with provided familiar reading each week, suggested lists of words, and suggested writing activities that would help reinforce her classroom instruction. In addition, she helped coordinate the check out and return of books and CDs from the Buddy Reading Programme library. For

the first graders, there was a coordination of the Buddy Reading Programme and their classroom instruction to a great extent.

Unfortunately, there was less direct coordination for the middle school students. Because the students had four different English/ language arts teachers with four very different teaching styles, less coordination was viable. Many of the students did not receive comprehensive balanced literacy instruction within their classrooms. However, the activities in the Buddy Reading Programme supported the elements of effective comprehensive balanced literacy instruction that lead to 'real reading'. While the middle school students may have benefitted if there had been more coordination between the elements of the programme and their regular classroom instruction, they were receiving comprehensive balanced instruction weekly through the programme. This gave these students more opportunity for developing 'real reading' skills than if they had not participated in the programme.

Environment

The final two elements that Friedland and Truesdell (2004, 2006) recommend for a successful Buddy Reading Programme are a quiet, comfortable place to read and access to a variety of books. Providing a classroom environment that is comfortable and conducive to reading is well documented in the literature (Sigmon, 2002; Campo, 2008; Diller, 2008) and is an element of my classroom that I had been developing for several years. Besides tables, rather than desks, my classroom included two couches, three chairs, beanbags, pillows, and rugs. There was plenty of room for students to spread out and become comfortable.

Access to books is an important element of any successful reading programme. My classroom library already contained about 2500 books in a variety of genres, but they were mainly adolescent books and not at a reading level appropriate for elementary students. I tackled this obstacle in two ways. First, each week the first graders brought a familiar book to reread with them. Second, using a Jordan Fundamentals Grant, I purchased pictures books. These books were on a shelf separate from my middle school classroom library and were sorted into bins by genre, topic, and author. Each bin was labelled and included a picture so the first grade buddies could easily identify the types of books it contained. Additional bins held hard-back books which the middle school students practised and recorded themselves reading aloud on a digital voice recorder. Then their recordings were burned to CDs and placed in the books. The first grade buddies could check out one of these books each week, listen to the recordings, and follow along in the text. Recorded books support readers, and these books supported the first grade students. A complete budget and book list is available in Appendix B.

Buddy Reading Sessions

A consistent time, place, and length of meeting time is important to a successful Buddy Reading Programme (Friedland and Truesdell, 2004, 2006), and the programme should last for several months so the buddies have time to become comfortable with each other (2004). This was an element that I planned carefully. Because of elementary and middle school schedules and bussing students, the Buddy Reading sessions lasted about an hour every other Tuesday, which began my ongoing action research steps of implementation, observation and reflection, evaluation, and modification. Middle school students arrived at my room at 9:00, gathered materials, read my response to their log

from the previous session, found the book they planned to read to their buddy, and asked questions. I also used this time to give the middle school students information, answer questions, and coach them as necessary. At 9:15 the first grade buddies arrived. When the first graders arrived, the middle school students found their buddy and quickly worked out partners for absent students, often without my help, and then led their buddies to the rug at the back of the room for a read aloud. I began each session by reading aloud in order to model fluent reading, using strategies, and discussing books. Sometimes the read alouds were silly and playful such as *Click Clack Moo* by Doreen Cronin. Other times they fit the season, such as *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats; sometimes I simply selected read alouds that I enjoyed. Which text I used was not as important as how I used it. As I read aloud to the students, I modelled predicting, questioning, connecting, and the other strategies for good readers, with the constructionist purpose of leading students to build on their prior knowledge and work toward using the strategies independently.

Then the pairs moved around the classroom and began their work together. They typically had between 30 and 35 minutes to work together. This was enough time for the elementary student to read a familiar book, read a new book with support from his or her buddy, for the middle school buddy to read a book aloud, and then for either a writing activity or word work – sometimes both. These are the elements suggested by Reading Recovery and support the five pillars of reading instruction (Clay, 1979, 1991, 1998; Caserta-Henry, 1996; Wasik, 1998; Meier and Invernizzi, 1999; NRP, NICHHD, 2000; Fisher, 2001; Pinnell, 2003; Mak *et al*, 2008). Just before 10:00, the students began cleaning up their area and the first grade buddies departed.

The middle school students came together to complete their logs and ask questions before returning to their classes by 10:10. On the logs, they recorded the activities they did, words their buddy needed to work on, and any questions for me. Each week I reviewed these logs and used them to write a response letter to the middle school student that gave them ideas for activities to work on and ways to help their buddy become a better reader and writer, which I placed in the folder for the student to review before the next meeting. Writing letters to the students was very effective in coaching them to use their meeting time in a beneficial way and allowed me to evaluate their progress thus far and make modifications as necessary. It also gave me an idea of what occurred during the session that I may not have observed. This pattern for each session was predictable and students quickly learned the routine. Students met with their elementary buddies from October through May. This length of time allowed them to become well acquainted with each other, become comfortable with each other, and develop a friendship.

Mentor Sessions

The mentoring sessions followed a similar format as the buddy sessions, except I did not provide a read aloud, and the mentor and student typically read the same book together. I did not have the opportunity to observe most of the mentoring sessions because I was teaching a class during the time that most occurred. This made the mentor journals an essential tool for communicating with the mentors and for determining techniques to support the students. When mentors arrived at the school, they stopped in my room to gather materials, and then picked their students up from class. Next they

moved to an area in the building, such as a conference room or the book room, where they could work uninterrupted.

The sessions typically lasted 30-40 minutes. Meetings between the middle school students and the adult mentors were scheduled for every other week (on the weeks students did not meet with their elementary buddies) between October and December. From January through May, a modification was made, at the request of the adult mentors, and these meetings were scheduled every week. When reading longer texts that were closer to grade level for the middle school students, the adults felt they did not have enough continuity meeting every other week and requested more meetings. For the students whose mentors consistently came to school, this was a positive change in the schedule. The middle school students met with their adult mentors during their study hall period, usually the last period of the day.

The Five Pillars of Reading and the Buddy Reading Programme

A comprehensive balanced approach to literacy instruction includes the five pillars of reading identified by the National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000). Each of these pillars was included to a varying degree within the programme, together with various elements of effective literacy instruction.

By the time students reach adolescence, it is assumed that they have a firm grasp of phonics (Wolfson, 2008), but this is not always the case for struggling readers. An understanding of phonics and automatic decoding of texts is essential to proficient reading. According to Fitzgerald (1999) from the time a child begins learning to read through second grade, he or she is developing phonological awareness. Pressley *et al* (1996) found that 95 percent of the effective teachers they surveyed included phonics

instruction as a part of their reading instruction. The phonics skills were taught in a variety of ways, including through the reading of real texts. To develop the deficient phonics skills of the middle school students who participated in the Buddy Reading Programme students had a variety of opportunities and ways to learn phonics skills. I taught the students basic decoding skills and an awareness of word parts, such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots. They were also permitted to read texts at a lower lever than they would normally read in their classes.

However rather than teaching these skills directly, I taught them these skills in the context of teaching their first grade buddies. A middle school student would be unwilling to work on sight word flash cards, attend to word endings, or use magnetic letters to develop an understanding of word families and rhyming words. Those activities would be considered "baby stuff". But they were willing to learn these skills to teach someone else. Likewise, most middle school students are unwilling to chunk words into parts to help themselves decode unfamiliar words, or as struggling readers were unaware that this was a strategy that they should employ. But they are willing to help a younger child chunk a word. By working with and teaching their buddies, the students were gaining an understanding of phonics that they had not grasped earlier in school. The older students had an opportunity to rehearse these skills using simpler texts, and were eventually able to transfer the skills to more difficult texts. The simpler texts fit within the students' ZPD (Vygotsky, 1986, 1987) and gave the students a language with which they could discuss texts and strategies. They were then able to build on this knowledge as they approached more difficult texts.

The variety of techniques for learning phonics skills within the context of real texts helped improve the phonetical awareness of both the older students and the first grade buddies. Again, the process of reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984), along with rehearsal of texts and dialogue benefitted the older students and increased their willingness to read easier texts and therefore reduced their frustration level. Allen (2000, p. 60) suggests that "we need to give [students] positive experiences so that they develop reading strategies that can be transferred to any type of reading required of them at some future point in their lives". This was a major goal of the Buddy Reading Programme.

In addition to teaching the middle school students basic phonics skills, including onset and rime, to teach to their buddies, I also taught them to chunk words into morphemes. One of the first suffixes the first graders learned was -ed. I taught the older students to help their buddies with regular past tense words by chunking them into the root and the -ed ending. This skill of chunking not only helped the first graders, but also provided an additional strategy for decoding to the older students in the programme. The older students had the opportunity to rehearse the strategies in a safe environment with the younger students, rather than in a more vulnerable environment with their peers.

Allen (2000) found that books with predictable patterns supported older students. However, books with predictable patterns are often children's books and are not likely to be read by adolescent readers. But, within the context of the Buddy Reading Programme, the middle school students read aloud many children's books to their first grade buddies. I intentionally included books with predictable patterns, such as *If you Give a Mouse a Cookie* and other books in this series by Laura Numeroff, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

by Eric Carle, and *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins* by Dr. Seuss which were popular with the children and gave the older students practice. I also occasionally included a predictable pattern book for my read alouds, which occurred at the beginning of each buddy session, in order to model and expose the older students to this type of text. The predictable texts gave the older students the opportunity to practise phonics skills.

Vocabulary was addressed as the middle school students worked both with their elementary buddies and with the mentors. The sight vocabulary of the elementary buddies increased as many of the first graders reached the full alphabetic phase (Ehri, 1999) during the year. The middle school students were excited to see the growth that their buddies made during this phase and noticed a change in their reading ability as a result of an increase in sight vocabulary and the action of sight reading. Because decoding became less of a struggle and took less attention, the first graders began picking up on the humour in the books they were reading. At this stage reading was fun and meaningful for the buddies and working with them was especially rewarding for the older students. Progressing through each phase is essential to proficient reading. Ehri (1999) suggests understanding the types of errors a student makes helps the teacher to provide the most appropriate type of instruction. Within the Buddy Reading Programme, individualized instruction was offered to the first graders who were working through these phases and to the middle school students who faced a variety of reading issues. Through observation and the middle school students' written records I determined areas of instruction that would best progress each first grade buddy and offered specific instructional strategies to aid the middle school students as they worked with their buddy.

The middle school students were also offered individualized vocabulary instruction through their mentors, but the reading issues were typically more complex than moving through the phases of sight vocabulary. Many struggling readers lack the background knowledge necessary to understand the vocabulary in the texts they read. Beck *et al* (1983) found that struggling readers benefitted from effective direct instruction of vocabulary. The vocabulary needs of the middle school students in the Buddy Reading Programme varied widely. As they worked with their mentors, vocabulary was addressed individually as needed, and in the context of the texts they were reading. Pressley *et al* (1996) found vocabulary in context to be an instructional strategy used in effective classrooms they studied. Beck *et al* (1983) agree that teaching vocabulary in context is more effective than teaching words in isolation. Based on the goals and parameters of the Buddy Reading Programme, vocabulary instruction was only done in context, and was typically in the form of adult mentors directly instructing the students on the vocabulary necessary to understand the text they were reading. Discussing new words, inferring their meanings, and linking them to background knowledge were techniques commonly used. Several of the middle school students' mentors used a combination of having students identify unknown words and providing relevant background knowledge to infer the word meanings and therefore to increase comprehension.

Fluent reading is often indicated by a student's reading rate, and Rasinski (2000) found that reading rate affected teachers' perceptions of reading proficiency. A poor reading rate may have been one factor that led teachers to recommend their seventh and eighth grade students for the Buddy Reading Programme because for some students, their

test scores did not indicate a significantly low reading level. Fluent reading can be developed in many ways, including through repeated readings. Repeated reading is fairly common in primary classrooms and was nothing new to the first grade buddies. They regularly read a short text several times to become proficient and confident in it. For the older students, however, this was less common. The texts they are required to read in school are much longer, which does not allow time for repeated reading. Many of the middle school students did have opportunities for repeated reading during the programme, although this was not specifically planned. Each week, the middle school student and his or her buddy selected a book together for the older student to read aloud. The first graders quickly determined favourites and begged to hear them over and over again. The result was that the older students' fluency and confidence improved.

Although I did not specifically instruct students through repeated readings, I did teach them to read more fluently by modelling expressive and word by word reading as Rasinski (2003) suggests. This modelling was in order to teach the middle school students how to read aloud to their buddies. After giggling at the word by word reading, the students began to describe the differences in the two reading styles and worked at adding expression as they read aloud to their first grade buddies. Through modelling and direct instruction, I taught students to attend to their phrasing. As they worked with their adult mentors, attention to phrasing was also a common area of work. As part of the Buddy Reading Programme, the middle school students read and recorded texts to create CDs of children's books for their buddies to check out. Before recording the text, the students read and practised the book several times. This silent, independent practice allowed the students to become familiar with the text and decode any difficult words

before performing and recording it. As a result their recordings were more fluent and expressive than they would have been without practice.

Teaching students to comprehend the texts they read was an essential element of the Buddy Reading Programme. Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) found a reciprocal relationship between exposure to print and comprehension. The Buddy Reading Programme provided increased exposure to print for the students who participated. Every week these students worked with their adult mentors for up to forty minutes and every other week participated in buddy sessions for about an hour beyond their regular classroom instruction. Over the course of the school year, this accounted for more than fifty hours. But it was not enough to expose students to more text without providing them with the tools and instruction for increasing their comprehension. As I read aloud at the beginning of each Buddy Reading session, I modelled the reading strategies I was using through a think aloud, which Brownell and Walther-Thomas (2000) found to be effective. Through the think aloud I encouraged the students to think about the text, make predictions, synthesize information, and articulate their inferences. Through my modelling, the middle school students reciprocally learned to employ the same strategies while working with their buddies.

When training students to work with their first grade buddies, I taught them to ask their buddies to retell the text after they had finished reading it. Retelling aids comprehension (Reutzel and Hollingsworth, 1988) and demonstrates the degree to which a text was comprehended. Adult mentors used this same strategy with the middle school students. Students were also taught to help their buddies focus on meaning making by asking ‘did that make sense?’ if a text was read incorrectly. Again, the adult mentors

employed this strategy when working with the middle school students. Rasinski (2003) suggests that visualizing, or creating imagery promotes comprehension. According to Pressley *et al* (1987), children younger than eight years old have a difficult time creating imagery, but that older students can create images. As I worked with first graders in the Buddy Reading Programme, most of whom were six or seven, I did not find this to be the case. They frequently drew pictures based on their reading or on their own stories. Creating imagery is a strategy that can enhance the comprehension of struggling readers (Pressley, 1987) and I believe should be taught from an early age. An activity that I taught the middle school students to try with their buddies was after reading a text to ask their buddy to draw a scene from the text and then write a sentence or two about it. This activity demonstrated the student's comprehension.

Teaching students to become real readers was an important aspect of the Buddy Reading Programme. In addition to teaching students specific skills, it was also necessary to teach them behaviours of real readers, including selecting a book, making meaning, and using strategies flexibly. It has been widely documented that giving students choice in reading materials leads to improved reading (Sanacore, 1999; Thomas and Wexler, 2007; Reis *et al,* 2008). Although the Buddy Reading Programme did not specifically include Self Selected Reading time, providing students choices in reading materials was an important consideration. The first grade buddies selected books to read with their middle school partners, and the middle school students selected books to read and discuss with their mentors. Although in both cases the books were read aloud, the element of choice remained.

Mentors worked with the middle school students, many of whom were reluctant readers, to determine what types of books the student preferred and then to help the student find those types of books. This was effective because when teachers or more capable peers *teach* a student to do something by showing them how it is done, supporting the student as he or she tries it, and then gradually releasing control for the student to do the task independently, the child is likely to learn. This is much more effective than simply giving a student a task to do without any instruction or support. Rogoff (1990, p. 138) points out that it is "necessary to acknowledge the role of guided participation in learning and development". Teaching students reading behaviours was a role of the mentors as they worked one to one with the middle school students.

Like the other buddy reading programmes discussed, the essential element of my programme was the collaboration and the opportunity for reciprocal teaching. Webb and Mastergeorge (2003) suggest that when a student explains something to help another student understand it, the student's own understanding of the content is increased. They add, if the student giving the explanation is less proficient, the act of giving an explanation seems to transform and clarify that student's thinking more than it helps the more proficient student (Ibid), what Vygotsky (1986) calls *spontaneous* concept development. Yuill *et al* (2009) suggest that a teacher or a more proficient peer can support the lower student and help him or her reach a higher level of comprehension than could have been achieved alone. In their reciprocal teaching study, Palincsar and Brown (1984) found that over time the students were better able to lead the discussions like their adult model, suggesting that the students were internalizing the strategies. Galton *et al* (2009) found that collaboration in writing led not only to academic gains, but also to

improved attitudes. The positive effects of collaboration likely transfer to other content areas as well. Improvements both academically and attitudinally are steps in the development of 'real readers', which was the goal of the Buddy Reading Programme.

Comprehensive Literacy, 'Real Reading', and the Buddy Reading Programme

The research on the five pillars of reading and on comprehensive balanced literacy, including strategy instruction, environment, and social elements of literacy, led me to a deeper understanding of what 'real reading' is and how to teach struggling readers to become real readers within their Zones of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1986, 1987). These are essential understandings in the development of real readers because "with collaboration, direction, or some kind of help, the child is always able to do more and solve more difficult tasks [than] he can independently" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 209). These ideas, along with the research on existing buddy programmes, led me to develop a Buddy Reading Programme that integrated the elements of literacy and reading development within a socially constructed reciprocal teaching model to develop the 'real reading' skills of the middle school students in the programme.

Ethics

The question of ethics in research is a significant one when working with children in a school setting. Cohen *et al* (2007) discuss the idea of absolutist ethics and relativist ethics. Absolutist ethics suggests that there is no freedom within the specific situation, while relativist ethics suggests that there are no absolute guidelines. In the United States, Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) have the role of evaluating the ethics of research studies (Israel and Hay, 2006). In my study I have read and adhered to the University of Sussex School of Education and Social Work Ethical Review Guidelines. However, it is

not enough for a researcher to depend on a set guideline or rely on an outside board to take the full responsibility for the ethics involved in a study. The researcher is responsible for being ethical at all steps of the research process.

Alderson and Morrow (2004, p. 137-143) concisely describe ten topics, which are prevalent throughout the literature, that should be considered in relation to ethics in research. I have chosen to use their topics as a framework for my thinking, and I will address each of these ten topics within the context of my research.

1. The Purpose of the Research: The purpose of the research must be considered before the research is conducted. "Is the project worth doing?" (p. 21) is the first question Alderson and Morrow (2004) ask of researchers. Winch (2002) suggests that the aims of educational research are 1) to produce knowledge related to education, 2) to help formulate policy, 3) to improve education, and 4) "to contribute to radical changes in society" (p. 154-156). Winch describes some of the criticisms of educational research, including that the research is irrelevant and impractical but critiques these views explaining that the purpose of educational research is to improve the practice in schools.

The purpose of my research was to determine whether a two-tiered approach to a Buddy Reading Programme, in which struggling readers are both mentored and serve as a mentor, is effective. Winch (2002) suggests that educational research conducted in schools should aim to solve a practical problem, and my research did just that. The subjects of this study are middle school students who are struggling readers. Students who do not read well struggle throughout their school careers and on into their adult lives. The impact of literacy on the subsequent health, mental health, family, employment, fulfilment, coping with difficulties, housing, citizenship and propensity to

become involved in crime is well documented in the literature (eg. Schuller *et al*, 2004). To find a method of helping these students learn to read effectively is likely to secure major long-term benefits. As Hammond (2004) points out, teachers are responsible for making positive school experiences frequent. For students who have had many negative school experiences, one purpose of this research is to provide some positive experiences with reading and the central aim is to find one practical way to help struggling readers. This research is therefore worth doing, and may provide insight into why some students struggle with reading and offer some solutions to this problem.

2. Costs and Hoped for Benefits: One cost of research is the risk to each participant. Identifying consequences to participants was one of the expectations for research published in The Belmont Report of 1979 (Israel and Hay, 2006). Researchers "need to be clear whether they are considering risk and benefit to each participant, or are using the much looser equation of risk to the participant and hoped-for benefits to society" (Alderson and Morrow 2004, p.39). "The researcher's first concern must be the effects on the individual research subject" (Ibid, p. 39).

Because my research draws on aspects of action research and the subjects are minors, the consideration of risk to each student is fundamental to the study. The risks in this study, however, are minimal. When the middle school students met with their first grade buddies once every two weeks, they missed part of their study hall (a period set aside for students to work individually on homework assignments, visit the library, or participate in activities such as Student Council, yearbook staff, or Recycling Club) and part of one academic class period. I planned the timing in such a way that students would not miss entire class periods. I also worked closely with teachers in the building to make

provisions for the students who missed class while participating in the programme. Occasionally, a student was working on a larger project or giving a presentation during the scheduled Buddy Reading meeting time. In this case, the middle school students would complete their academic task and then come join the others in the programme, but these occasions were rare.

Homan (2002) suggests that it is possible that research could benefit the subjects while doing a disservice to the school. This could occur when the research suggests that the school is deficient in some way. This is a complex issue that researchers must consider. While the students should be the main concern (Alderson and Morrow, 2004; Cohen *et al*, 2007) the school has allowed the researcher to conduct the study and has certain expectations of the researcher. In this study, while I am looking for ways to improve instruction for students, my focus is on a specific programme rather than instructional methods within the school. The issues that cause secondary students to struggle with readers are so varied and complex that clear associations cannot be drawn between instructional methods and the effect of poor reading skills. The causes that led the students to struggle in middle school are beyond the scope of my research. Therefore concerns that the research could lead to a negative impact on the school are minimal in this study.

3. Privacy and Confidentiality: It is essential to consider "how the study will protect the anonymity of individuals, roles, and incidents in the project" (Creswell, 2003, p. 66). The essential idea to consider is that the information provided will not reveal the identity of the participants (Cohen *et a,*. 2007). I carefully considered this point and protected the participants in the study in several ways. First, the data I collected, such as

surveys and interviews, miscue analyses, and record sheets were kept confidential. Student test scores were also kept confidential, with the exception of their regular use within the school setting. Israel and Hay (2006) suggest that names of participants and any identifying information should be removed early in the study. In my study all student names are pseudonyms in order to preserve anonymity. Photos taken were used for illustrative purposes during data analysis, but not used in the final report, in order to protect the identity of the student participants.

4. Selection, Inclusion, and Exclusion: If a research design is ethical, it highlights questions about the ethics of excluding anyone from the method that is introduced. Likewise, selecting the participants must be considered carefully. Selection of subjects is another area of research discussed within The Belmont Report of 1979 (Israel and Hay, 2006). Within my research, I first considered exclusions. At the time the study began, I was teaching two eighty-eight minute sections of English and language arts to students who scored mainly below average to average on assessments. To select one class to participate in the study would become an ethical dilemma for me. The two groups of students would be receiving very different instruction. It might be difficult to fully meet all of the required state standards with the group participating in the programme. Issues beyond my control, such as students moving in and out of the school would also have an impact on the study. Therefore, I rejected the idea of conducting the study with one class section only.

Instead, I chose to look beyond the walls of my classroom and across the school as a whole. I decided to limit the study to students in seventh and eighth grades. I wanted to find the students who would most benefit from participation and who were not

already receiving other services, such as special education. I contacted the three other teachers who taught 7th or 8th grade English and language arts. I asked each to identify her most struggling students based on test scores and classroom performance. Based on this initial inquiry, I had the names of 22 students.

I contacted these students, explained the programme and the study, and sought informed consent from the students and their parents. Eighteen students returned their informed consent forms and chose to participate in the study. Before the first meeting with the buddies, two families moved to a different school, and halfway through the study one student chose to opt-out. This left me with fifteen students who participated in the study for the entire year.

5. Funding: Winch (2002) suggests that school improvement researchers are often paid on the assumption that the research will make a difference in the school and to the students. As I am employed by the school in which I did the research, receiving extra pay for researching a method to improve student learning could lead to an ethical dilemma. As a teacher, I should always strive to provide the best instruction possible for my students without the promise of additional compensation. Within my research study this was not an issue, as no payment or additional compensation for my work was given.

In order to fund the Buddy Reading Programme, I applied for a "Jordan Fundamental Grant" approximately eight months before beginning the programme. This grant, which is funded by Michael Jordan and the Nike Corporation provides grants of 2,500 USD to teachers in high poverty schools to fund innovative projects. I also received 200 USD from the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) at my school. The money went toward purchasing trade books for pairs to read in the classroom, levelled

books, trade books for the elementary students to check out and take home, hands-on manipulatives such as magnetic letters and word stamps, technology equipment including iPods and digital voice recorders, blank CDs and CD labels and cases for the recorded books. Professional books were also purchased for training and research purposes. The complete budget is included in Appendix B.

As part of the Jordan grant, I was required to complete a short report at the mid point and the end of the school year to describe how the funding had been used and the results. The results reported to the Jordan Fundamentals organization were preliminary and did not include all of the data collected during the study. However, the report did give an accurate picture of implementation based on anecdotes and student responses. The Jordan Fundamentals organization did not expect a specific outcome as a result of their funding, so no ethical issues were raised by using this funding source.

6. Review and Revision of the Research Aims and Methods: Reflexive practice is essential to effective teaching. Reflection on practices often leads to a revision of those practices. Likewise, I gave myself the opportunity to revise my research aims throughout the process. Cohen *et al* (2007) suggest that the researcher must determine whether the research is *for* people or *about* people. As I worked on my literature review and observed students, my main revision was a narrowing and defining of my research questions and of the types of reading I wanted to complete as part of the literature review. In considering the question of Cohen *et al* (2007) I determined that my research is both for and about people. By learning more about the student participants in my study, I could better focus on methods that would benefit them.

7. Information about the Research Given to Participants and Parents: It is essential that researchers are honest with the participants about the research being conducted. However, it is not necessarily imperative to give them all of the information regarding the research. Dunne *et al* (2005, p. 63) explain, "I told them the subject of my research, but not the theoretical resources I was bringing forward to make sense of the data". As part of the informed consent I provided, I told parents and students that I would provide information on the research to them upon request. In my role as a teacher, I sometimes found it beneficial to discuss specific elements of the study with parents. For example, in a school parent conference in which both the parent and the student were present, I told a parent that the student was working well with his or her elementary buddy, or that he or she had become a positive role model. Providing this information to the parents and students supports Alderson and Morrow's (2004, p. 33) suggestion to "create more equal cooperative and rewarding relationships with [study participants]". Aside from this, little information regarding the study was requested. Alderson and Morrow's (2004) idea of Information Given to Participants and Parents flows smoothly into and somewhat overlaps step 8, Informed Consent.

8. Consent: Obtaining informed consent is one of the most fundamental concepts in researching on human subjects. Alderson and Morrow (2004) have much to say on the topic. "It is unethical…[for teachers] to do research with the children and young people they work with, without asking for the children's informed consent" (Ibid, p. 27). They suggest providing a simple leaflet, written in user-friendly terms, that includes basic information such as main areas of study, main questions, the purpose and aims, timing and length of the project, methods used, how the data will be used, contact information

for the researcher, and any risks or costs (Ibid). Homan (2002) suggests four elements of informed consent: full disclosure of elements that will occur, all participants understand the information, the participants are able to make an informed decision, and participation is completely voluntary. While Cohen *et al* (2007) provide six guidelines of informed consent: an explanation of procedures and purposes, a description of any discomforts, benefits that may be expected, any alternatives that might provide advantages to the participants, an opportunity for participants to ask questions, and the understanding that participants may withdraw from the project any time they wish.

In his work on assumed consent, Homan (2002) provides several instances of educational research in which the researcher assumed consent of participants, rather than seeking informed consent. Because teachers have access to information about students that an outside researcher does not have (Homan 2002), I was very careful about securing informed consent prior to beginning my research study. I provided each student with a letter that fully described the research project and required both a student and a parent signature for consent. Additionally, the first grade buddies were given written parental permission to participate in the programme and research, and the adult mentors gave consent to participate as well. All informed consent forms are is Appendix C. Cohen *et al* (2007) suggest that the researcher should seek informed consent early in the research project. In my initial meeting with students I explained the information contained in the letter and provided students the opportunity to ask questions. This is supported by Homan (2002) who writes that children may need a more detailed explanation than adults and by Israel and Hay (2006) who indicate that informed consent suggests that participants understand and agree to the research. Informed consent protects a person's

"right to not be harmed" (McNamee, 2002 p. 2) and informs participants of the implications of the research (Homan, 2002). No student participated in the training or the research study unless I had a signed letter from him or her and a parent.

Alderson and Morrow (2004, p. 106) give an explanation of what "consent" means. Participants have the option of saying yes or no, "have time to decide", face "no pressure while they decide", are "welcome to ask questions", may "talk to a friend or other person before they decide", and "can refuse or drop out at any time without needing to give a reason". All of my participants were given these considerations. Several students who were invited to participate chose not to, and one student dropped out of the study part way through. There were no negative consequences for these students.

9. Dissemination: How the research will be presented is an important ethical consideration. "If respect for young participants is genuine, it is honoured through all stages of the project, in efforts to collect, understand, and present their views as fairly as possible" (Alderson and Morrow, 2004, p. 54). As I collect data, and then present it, my goal is to present students in their own voices and in their own words. I will disseminate information through my written thesis, and any related articles or presentations. I will protect students' identities in all cases.

10. Impact on Children: "The impact of research includes both the effects on young research participants during the projects and also the longer-term effects on attitudes towards all similar children, young people, and services for them" (Alderson and Morrow, 2004, p. 126). Cohen *et al* (2007) suggest that it is the responsibility of the researcher to anticipate and resolve problems. During this research study, there were a

few short-term problems related to students' class schedules. In these instances, I worked with the classroom teacher or the student, as necessary, to resolve the problem quickly.

The goal of my research is to have a positive impact on the reading lives, abilities, and attitudes of the students who participate in this research study. If the research is successful, that is, if it validates the use of a two-tired Buddy Reading Programme, this is a programme that may be easily adapted and implemented in other schools and settings. As for the long-term effects on the reading lives of the participants, that is an issue that is beyond the scope of this year-long study.

A final ethical issue I wish to address, which was not discussed by Alderson and Morrow is that of power. "Issues of power in the research process and analysis of the social world have been significant" (Dunne *et al,* 2005, p. 85). Because I was a teacher in the school in which I conducted my research, I had a certain amount of power over the students in the study. According to Cohen *et al* (2007) and Thomas (2009) adult researchers will always have some power over children. Homan (2002) suggests that when participants are normally taught by the researcher, the participants may have a sense of trust or loyalty toward the researcher. I have tried, however, to limit this power in that many of the participants are not in my class, and therefore I have no direct power over their grades. Second, while students are working with their buddies I stand back as an observer and do not participate unless I see a major problem. In these cases, I make a suggestion or offer a strategy, and then exit. Students have been trained to work with their buddies, and therefore have the knowledge they need to lead their sessions without my intervention. Students have "some of the power to make decisions" (Alderson and Morrow, 2004, p. 33) about what happens when they meet with their first grade buddy.

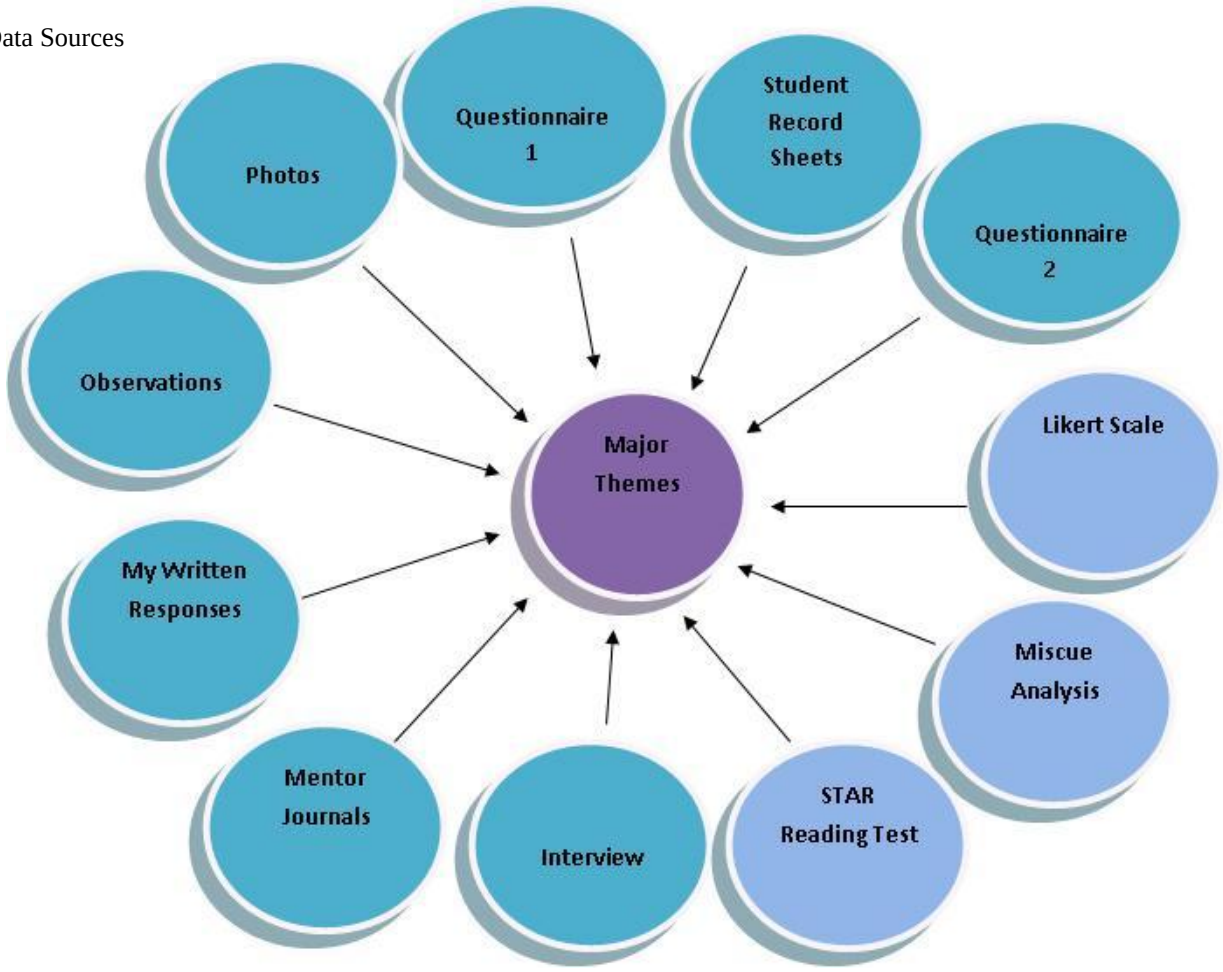
Finally, I listen to what the students say, either on their written record sheets or in interviews. "Newer approaches emphasize respecting children's standpoints and competencies, and making this respect part of the research process" explain Alderson and Morrow (2004, p. 23). Listening to the students and taking their input into account is essential to this study.

Data Collection

There are numerous methods of data collection available to researchers. The types of methods used are not as important as the consideration of their purposes and how each will be used. However, Brannen (1993, p. 11) cautions that "field methods which do not encompass observation, informant interviewing, and sampling are seen as narrow and inadequate" and continues by explaining that "researchers ought to be flexible and therefore ought to select a range of methods that are appropriate to the research problem under investigation". Likewise, Elliott (1991, p. 77) asserts that multiple techniques of monitoring research "will help to secure a more penetrating grasp of the situation". I chose to use a variety of data collection methods to gain a better overall picture of the Buddy Reading Programme.

During the school year that the Buddy Reading Programme was implemented, I collected a variety of both quantitative and qualitative data. Through examining and

Figure 3: Data Sources



colour-coding the data I was able to triangulate the multiple sources of data based on my research questions, and also identified several additional emerging themes.

Qualitative data included two student questionnaires, one at the beginning and one mid-way through the programme; an interview at the end of the programme; student record sheets from the Buddy Reading Sessions and my responses, mentor journals, observations, and photos, all of which were ongoing. Quantitative data included a Likert Scale at the beginning of the programme; two Miscue Analyses, one mid way through and one at the end of the programme; and the STAR Reading test, which was

administered to all students in the school three times during the school year. As I reviewed all of these data sources, they led to the major themes which I will discuss in Chapter 5. Table 2 indicates the data collection methods used throughout the study.

Table 2: Methods of Data Collection

	Aug./ Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May
Likert Scale		16 students							
Student Questionnaire		16 students			15 students				
Student interview								15 student interviews in late April/ early May	
Miscue Analysis				Conducted once per student mid January – early February				Conducted once per student in late April or early May	
STAR Reading test (Benchmark Assessment)	Conducted in English classes. All students in grades 6-8 took this test				Conducted in English classes. All students in grades 6-8 took this test			Conducted in English classes, exact date of test varied by class	
I-STEP Test (State-Mandated Annual Assessment)	All students in grades 6-8 took this test						Spring I-Step included 2 testing sessions		All students in grades 6-8 took this test
Student Record Sheets		Middle school students completed a record sheet following each Buddy Reading session							
Responses to Student Record Sheets		I responded to each student's record sheet in the form of a letter							
Observation Notes		I observed all 15 middle school students throughout the programme and recorded my observations in a field diary							
Photos		Photos of middle school students taken during each Buddy Reading session							
Mentor Journals		Each mentor completed a journal following each meeting							

Likert Scale

I administered one Likert scale to students as an initial indicator of reading attitudes. This quantitative method was the first data I collected and analyzed. Dunne *et al* (2005) suggest that this numerical approach can be mathematically suspect, and that researchers reveal their views within the text of the questionnaire. Thomas (2009) suggests that Likert scales are primarily beneficial for measuring attitude and determining agreement or disagreement with a statement. I used the Likert scales as an initial indicator of possible attitude, but because of its shortcomings, which will be discussed later, did not administer it after the programme.

Surveys

Surveys are useful sources of data collection (Elliott, 1991; McNiff, 1993; Robson, 2002; Dunne *et al*, 2005). Survey questions should be linked to the research questions (Robson, 2002). There are three ways to administer surveys: self-completion of written questionnaires which can be in hard copy or on-line, face to face interviews, or telephone interviews (Ibid). In my research, I administered written questionnaires to the students twice during the study – once at the beginning, a few weeks after the Likert scale, and once mid-way through the year. The two questionnaires, which had similar questions, gave me the opportunity to see change over time in the students. Copies of the survey questions are in Appendix D.

Interviews

Interviews, as well as audiotapes and transcripts of interviews are a common data collection method in action research (Elliott, 1991; Altrichter *et al*, 1993; McNiff, 1993; Alderson and Morrow, 2004). Yin (1984, 2003) suggests that interviews are an important

sources of information. Interviews of participants or a running commentary, in which everything said or done (tone and gestures) is recorded, can be conducted by either an outside person or the researcher (Elliott, 1991). Interviews can help the researcher to gain much information in a relatively short amount of time. Thomas (2009) cautions against interviewing children because, he suggests, it can be difficult to build rapport. However, Alderson and Morrow (2004, p. 52) suggest that "the aim of interviews is to set up mutual respect, trust, and rapport quickly, to obtain personal and sometimes intimate and distressing details". Because I knew the students in my study before interviewing them, developing rapport was not an issue. Before conducting an interview, it is essential that the researcher has first determined what she wants to know and why, planned a focus for the interview, and written questions that enable her to reflect or are central to the research questions (Altrichter *et al*, 1993). During my research study, I interviewed each middle school student at the end of the programme, in order to gain their multiple perspectives. Determining effective questions was a focus of my pre-interview writing. Like survey questions, interview questions should be related to research question (Robson, 2002). During the interview, I wrote students' responses in their own vernacular speech to better hear the voice of each student. Interviews with students were conducted individually.

Writing students' responses during the interview not only saved the time required later for transcription, but also allowed the students more time to think. I have found that many middle school students, and especially struggling readers, are not accustomed to the metacognition required for reflexive thinking. They have spent little time thinking about how or why they learn in a particular way. Typing student responses as they were

speaking allowed them time to think about their answers and removed some of the pressure they felt to answer quickly. It also provided for some of the cultural preferences of students, such as not making eye contact with those perceived as being in authority. At times, I also recorded the interviews through the use of a digital voice recorder, but this was in addition to, rather than in place of, typing students' responses.

Observations and Field Diaries

My Observations and Notes

Observation (Elliott, 1991; Altrichter *et al*, 1993; McNiff ,1993; Robson, 2002) is a usual process for teachers who informally assess their students regularly. Research requires "an eye for the whole situation" (Altrichter *et al,* 1993, p. 83). When writing up data drawn from observations, the writing should be "clear, engaging, and [help] the reader experience 'being there'" (Robson, 2002, p. 166). Strong writing of observations helps the "story and findings become believable and realistic, accurately reflecting the complexities of real life" (Ibid, p. 166). Geertz (1973) and Thomas (2009) call this thick description. When writing, the researcher should reflect on the scene, try to understand what is going on based on his or her knowledge.

A field diary or research notes (Elliott, 1991; Altrichter *et al,* 1993; McNiff, 1993; Eisenhardt, 2002) helps the researcher record thoughts, feelings, observations, and impressions immediately before the ideas are lost. Altrichter *et al* (1993) suggest that a field diary should always include the date, context, and important information, feelings, and observations. They emphasise the importance of writing regularly and analyzing it periodically. They also suggest sharing some parts with others for collaboration and further analysis. Eisenhardt (2002) adds that the researcher should write questions based

on the notes, record all hunches and anecdotes while observing subjects. Keeping notes of observations is an important method of data collection since it is essentially impossible to remember all of the details when observing subjects.

I planned to use three different types of notes in my own research. First, I kept a field diary each time the middle school students met with their buddies in which I recorded all of my observations. As the middle school students worked with their first grade buddies, I circulated throughout the room observing students' interactions, comments, struggles, and successes. During the first few buddy sessions, I was not sure exactly what to look for as I circulated the room, and mainly assisted students who had questions. However, after reading student logs for a few sessions, my observations became more focused. I had a better understanding of which middle school students were struggling in their partnership and needed extra support, specific skills the first graders needed, and types of conversations that were occurring. My observations became more structured, and I carried a clipboard, paper, pen, and camera with me. I wrote down specifically what I heard a student say that I wanted to discuss with him or her, what the middle school students did well, changes I noticed in the middle school student's ability to tutor his or her buddy, and suggestions for what activities might benefit the buddy next.

My observation notes helped inform me as I wrote responses to the middle school students about their logs and their interactions with students. The notes I wrote during the buddy sessions were especially important because I typically had little time for reflection or for writing notes immediately following the session.

Student Record Sheets

The second type of field diary was a record sheet kept by the middle school students. Each time they met with their buddies they recorded the activities they completed together, any struggles they had, and success that the buddy had. I reviewed these record sheets following each buddy session and wrote a letter of response to the middle school student and made suggestions for ways to help the buddy further and other strategies to try. These record sheets helped me keep track of the learning that occurred, since I was not physically able to observe each group at the same time. The format for the students' response log was revised twice during the year, in order to make it easier for the students to use and understand. The final version of the log, (found in Appendix A) created around December, also helped to guide the middle school students through the types of activities they could complete during the session. This was helpful to them because I had observed that few of the students consistently used the hand-out in their folder describing types of activities. Including the main types of activities (such as read aloud, student reading, word work, and writing) on the log itself led the middle school students to more independence and, in general, to more productive sessions.

Mentor Journals

The third type of field diary was recorded by the adult mentor. Each middle school student had a small notebook in which the mentor could record notes. These notebooks, like the record sheets, included a description of what was completed at each mentoring session, books they had read together, any struggles the mentor or student had, and the student's successes. However, rather than completing a specific form, the mentors could write their notes on lined paper in whatever format they chose. After each session, I reviewed the notebook and wrote a response to the mentor. Again, I made

suggestions and noted successes. This gave me a way to communicate regularly with the mentors, analyze students' progress over time, make any necessary modifications, maintain the fidelity of the mentoring process, and evaluate the mentoring sessions and student learning. A few mentors preferred to communicate with me via e-mail, in addition to the mentor journals. I allowed this, and responded in much the same way as I did to the actual journals.

Photos

Photos are another valuable qualitative data collection method (Elliott, 1991; Altrichter *et al*, 1993; McNiff, 1993). Some of the uses of photos suggested by Altrichter *et al* (1993) include: to supplement observation notes, to give a holistic impression, to capture non-verbals, to raise questions, and as a starting point for interviews. Within my school corporation photos of students are regularly taken for a variety of purposes. At the beginning of the school year, parents sign a release form to allow photographs to be taken of their child. Photos may not be taken of students whose parents do not sign the release. A copy of the release form is in Appendix C. Early in the study I ensured that release forms were in place before taking photographs of students. In my research study, I took pictures of the middle school students and first grade buddy pairs at almost every session.

Test Scores

I used students' test scores as one type of quantitative data. Throughout the school year, students took the STAR Reading test three times as a benchmark assessment. Sewell *et al* (2007) found that the STAR Reading test showed results similar to other established reading tests. Because the school already administered this assessment, it was a convenient measure to include in my study. During the 2008-2009 school year,

students also took the state required ISTEP test twice. Typically this test is only given once during the year, however, the state of Indiana was switching from an autumn test to a spring testing schedule. To meet the No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) requirements, a state assessment must be completed every calendar year, so the ISTEP was administered twice this school year. From a research perspective, this gave me additional data on students' progress. However, the ISTEP data was later discarded because the differences between the autumn and spring tests made score comparisons unreliable.

STAR Reading is a benchmark assessment that all students grades 3-8 in the school corporation take three times a year. It is a basic comprehension test in which students read passages of text and answer multiple choice questions related to the text and to the vocabulary in the text. The test is administered on computers and students work at their own pace to complete the test. The test evaluates lower level comprehension. I am more interested in students' higher order thinking which leads to 'real reading' than in low level comprehension, however, students who can think about text at higher levels and flexibly use reading strategies typically do not struggle with lower level comprehension. Therefore, I chose to include the STAR Reading scores in this study.

Students' reading skills declining over the summer, often called 'the Summer Reading Slump' is a widely recognized phenomenon (Worthy *et al,* 1999; Kim, 2004; Biancarosa and Snow, 2006). The idea behind it is that when students do not read over the summer break, their reading scores actually decrease. Kim (2004) found that reading as few as four or five books during the summer was enough to prevent a decline in reading achievement. The STAR Reading test scores could illustrate any instances of the

Summer Reading Slump more effectively than other data collection methods. Although the Summer Reading Slump is an interesting phenomenon, it did not directly impact on my study, as I conducted the research within one school year.

Miscue Analysis

One type of data collection that worked particularly well for my research was a Miscue Analysis (Wilde, 2000). Miscue Analyses are based on Clay's (2000) work on Running Records, but the miscue analysis is a more detailed approach. To conduct a miscue analysis, a teacher listens to a student read a piece aloud. While the student is reading, the teacher marks any miscues, or read errors, the student makes. Hudson *et al* (2005) suggest that Miscue Analyses allow teachers to assess students' fluency and guide instruction and are one way to evaluate students' reading accuracy and determine patterns of errors. Stanovich (1986) points out that oral reading errors can occur for many different reasons and may not show word recognition alone. I agree that a Miscue Analysis does not tell the teacher everything about a student's reading, but it does make the reading process more visible and can help in determining patterns of errors.

In a Miscue Analysis, after reading the piece aloud, the student gives a verbal summary of the piece. This is the major difference between a Miscue Analysis and a Running Record, in which no summary is given. During the summary, the teacher can check for comprehension. Later the teacher returns to the piece with the errors marked and analyses the types of errors made. In my research I conducted a Miscue Analysis with each middle school student twice during the study. I used three different texts for the Miscue Analyses: an excerpt from Bud, Not Buddy written at a 7th grade level, an excerpt from Shiloh written at a 5th grade level, and an excerpt from Seedfolks written at a 4th

grade level. I began by having students read the 7th grade level text, but if this seemed difficult, I moved to one of the easier texts. Although I had many 8th graders in the programme, I opted to not use an 8th grade level text. Many books that are at an 8th grade level or above contain difficult or very specific vocabulary. Because my goal was to hear students' reading and determine their comprehension, rather than have them try to decode difficult vocabulary, I was satisfied if the students could read and comprehend the 7th grade level text fluently.

Data Coding and Analysis

Reflective Practice

Educational research must consider the value of reflective practice by the teacher in the classroom because without teacher reflection, little real learning will occur in the classroom over time. Much research on reflective practice has been done by Elliott (1991) and McNiff (1993). "The best teaching," states McNiff (199, p. 10) "is done by those who want to learn". And Elliott (1991, p. 27) points out that "the quality of teaching depend[s] on the development of teachers' reflexive powers".

"Do y instead of x and your pupils will learn more" is a statement that teachers often hear from administrators and educational policy makers. However, "teaching is such a complex activity that such simple statements just do not exist" (Bassey, 1999, p. 48). Top down approaches to instruction are not very effective (Black, 2008). Instead, "the idea of teaching embedded in the change process focus[es] on the process, rather than the product of learning" (Elliott, 1991 p. 10). Reflective practitioners are in the process of constant change because they evaluate their practice and change it based upon that evaluation (McNiff, 1993).

Although "theory forms and informs practice" (McNiff ,1993, p.14) "it is a mistake to expect teachers to only read about, or accept otherwise vicarious experience, as the main source for their professional development. Teachers should be encouraged to develop their own theories of education from and through their own practices" (Ibid, p. 39). Eames (1993, p. 72) tells of his own experiences reading and applying "the theoretical insights of academic writers" to his own classroom practices, but of the added value of collaborating with other teachers and "the importance of defining my own understanding in writing" (Ibid, p.73). This is supported by Elliott (1991, p. 20) who states "teachers should not only take responsibility for realizing a pedagogical theory in practice, but also for generating such a theory from practice". He points out that when teachers were "given opportunities within their institutions for reflection, they were able to articulate and develop the pedagogical theories implicit in their practices" (Ibid, p. 41). Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggest that teacher research should be a major factor in professional development. However, "the emphasis in most of the literature… is still on schools and their organisation, rather than on teachers' understanding of practice" (McNiff, 1993, p. 48).

Elliott (1991, p. 38) explains the need for reflective teachers and teacher researchers: "the more able teachers are at self-monitoring their classroom practice, the more likely they are to bring about fundamental changes in it". Throughout my teaching career, I have made reflection an important practice. I have made changes to my own classroom instruction based on both research and practice. I have conducted both formal and informal educational action research. Within this study, I went beyond the walls of my own classroom and addressed the larger issues within my school community. Elliott

(1991, p. 38) says that "reflexive practice necessarily implies both self-critique and institutional critique". Within this action research study, I addressed the reading issues within the institution in which I work, asked questions, developed theory, applied action steps, revised, and wrote the story of this process with the goal of effecting change within my school.

Likert Scale Analysis

The Likert scale was the first source of data that I began to analyse. I created a chart in Excel with students' names down the first column and the Likert statements across the top. Then I used students' written responses to fill in the chart with students' responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. At the bottom of each column, I tallied the number of occurrences for each response: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. From the tallied scores, I began to see some patterns in students' answers. For example, nine students responded 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' to the statement "reading is one of my favourite activities" and nine students (although not the same nine students) responded 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to the statement "I don't like SSR days". These responses seemed to indicate that many of the students in the programme did not enjoy reading, and I colour-coded these indications blue. I continued examining student responses on the Likert scale and colour-coding them in this way. From the Likert scale, seven different themes began to emerge.

However, of the data collection methods I used, the Likert Scale proved to be the most unreliable. A common criticism of the Likert Scale is that participants typically select responses at either end of the scale (Dunne *et al*, 2005). This was not evident in my data, as student responses covered the entire scale. Rather, the problem I found with

the Likert Scale was that the responses on it were not consistent with the other data collection methods, or even within the scale itself. This led to an interesting point about the reliability and limitations of Likert scales which came to light through this process. Although the majority of students seemed to indicate that they did not like reading throughout the scale, and when comparing reading to a variety of other activities only two students indicated that they liked reading, on the statement "I like reading" ten students responded 'agree' or 'strongly agree', three were 'neutral' and only two responded 'strongly disagree'. A few possible reasons for this may be because the Likert scale was the first data I collected in early October. That early in the programme, the students may have given the response they thought I expected, or may have been trying to please me. Another possible explanation is that this was the first statement on the scale, and students became more honest the further they progressed on the scale. Whatever the reason for this inconsistency, the Likert scale did seem to provide some initial student attitudes, but also proved to be a somewhat unreliable method. Therefore it was not sufficiently trustworthy for the data it generated to have a major role in the findings.

Survey Analysis

Just as I had done with the Likert scale students completed during the year I placed the results of the two surveys in Excel documents. Students names were recorded down the first column and the survey questions were entered across the top row. I recorded each student's responses in the table. This led to a very wide table, as many of the students' responses were sentences. However, my purpose was not to create a succinct chart, but rather to examine and compare student responses to each survey question, and the Excel chart format worked for this purpose. Again, I colour-coded the

students' responses. This colour-coding allowed me to determine emerging patterns and to determine how many of the fifteen students in the study indicated each theme. I charted the number of instances of these emerging themes on Table 4 below.

Interview Analysis

Following all of the interviews, I first reviewed all of the interviews together to determine whether the same, different, or additional themes emerged and how many students indicated each theme. Next, I reviewed each interview individually and compared the responses to the student's earlier surveys. This allowed me to observe any patterns of change in the individual students' attitudes toward reading and their understanding of the process of 'real reading'. I then compared the interview notes and the surveys to what I had observed throughout the year and to the notes from mentors. This allowed me to look for any possible inconsistencies in what students said to me as opposed to what had actually been observed. In most cases, with the exception of some Likert scales, the surveys, observations, and interviews showed consistent patterns for each student. This triangulation of data led me to more accurate understandings of each student's reading process and growth, or lack of growth, than a single data source might have. The triangulation of data led to more reliable conclusions. I drew heavily on the interviews as I constructed vignettes of each student (found in Chapter 6 and Appendix G) and in my findings.

Observation and Field Diary Analysis

Within my research study, the observation notes and field diaries, informed by Elliott (1991), Altrichter *et al* (1993), McNiff (1993), and Robson (2002) played an important role. The three types of observation notes (mine, the mentors', and the student

record sheets) allowed me to look for patterns in each student's behaviours over time. Throughout the programme, I compared what I had observed during the sessions with what the students had written on their logs, in order to write biweekly responses to the middle school students. I also compared these notes to the mentor journals. This helped me to determine whether or not the students' reading behaviours with the buddy were similar to their behaviours with mentors, and aided me in discovering patterns in individual student's strategy use, attitude, and reading behaviour. At the end of the programme, I compared these observation journals to the surveys and the interview each student had completed throughout the year. The triangulation of these sources of qualitative data allowed me to draw more reliable conclusions and look for patterns among all of the students in general to discover emerging themes. The field diaries also informed me as I wrote vignettes of each student.

Photo Analysis

As I reviewed the photos, I was able to pick up on non-verbal communication. For instance, if a middle school student was absent and the buddy had to double-up with another pair, the photos recorded to what extent the new buddy participated with the pair. If a pair was not working well together, the photos may have shown problems, such as the students' lack of proximity to one another, which I had not immediately observed. If a first grade buddy admired the older partner, this may have shown in the photos as well. The dynamics between the partners may have shown in the photos through facial expression and body language. By looking at a pair of students over time, changes were observed. The photos provided visual evidence that was instructive to the middle school students in a way that written or verbal communication might not have been. The photos

became another tool for observation and proved to be most useful to me as I wrote letters to the students following each buddy session, but added little information to the findings of the study.

Test Score Analysis

Another method of coding and analyzing data occurred when I looked at the students' test scores. Initially, I had intended to use both the ISTEP autumn and spring tests and the three STAR Reading tests. However, the results available from the ISTEP test included only a pass or fail rating for each student in relation to the cut score; what contributed to the score was not made available. In addition, the spring ISTEP test was drastically different from, and reported to be much more difficult than the autumn test. Therefore, I believed that these scores would not give an accurate picture of students' reading and chose to eliminate these scores from my final data analysis. I did, however, include the STAR Reading test scores.

The results of the STAR Reading test are in the form of grade levels, so a student who is reading on grade level at the beginning of 8th grade would have a STAR Reading score of 8.0, while in December the grade level score would be 8.5. I had access to students' scores on the STAR Reading test for two years prior to the implementation of the Buddy Reading Programme, the year of the programme, and for students who were in seventh grade during the programme, scores from the autumn following the programme.

To analyze the STAR Reading data, I focused on the data from autumn 2008 to spring 2009, the school year in which the programme was implemented. I constructed a chart showing students' scores from the two school years before the Buddy Reading Programme began, the year of the programme, and for the autumn following the

programme, if available. This chart allowed me to look for any patterns of growth. I first analyzed the scores of all of the participants in an attempt to draw conclusions about the effect of the Buddy Reading Programme on students' test scores. Then I analyzed each student's scores individually and compared them to the other sources of data to look for any patterns. I colour-coded the data to indicate an improvement from autumn to spring and, for interest, to indicate any decline in reading skills, or slump, over the summer. I also colour-coded data for two students whose scores seemed to be questionable based on the other available data that I collected. Next, I colour-coded data that illustrated an increase in spring to autumn scores for the autumn following the Buddy Reading Programme. I compared the students' scores, averages, and ranges to those of students who had not participated in the programme. Finally, I conducted a Z-Test on the STAR Reading test scores to determine whether there was any statistical significance in the comparison of scores.

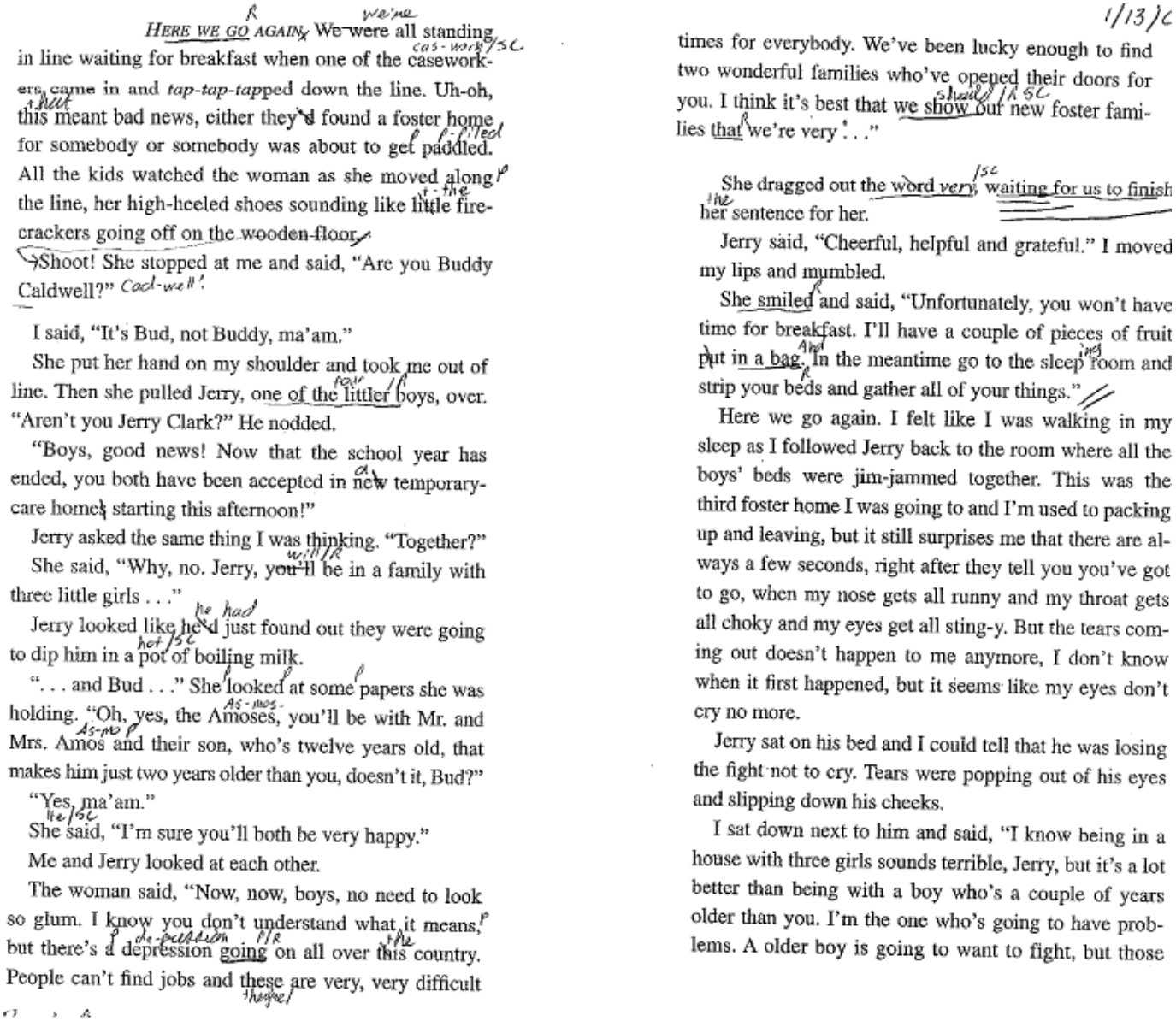
Miscue Analysis

To determine students' reading accuracy during the Miscue Analysis, I used a coding system (see Table 3) to record their miscues on a photocopy of the text that they were reading. The coding system allowed me to determine students' types of errors, and to later read the text in the way the student read it. This was valuable in recognizing patterns of errors. Below is the coding system I used when conducting Miscue Analyses, along with a sample from a Miscue Analysis that I conducted based on a text Takeelah read in January 2009.

Table 3: Codes for Miscue Analysis

Code	Explanation
R or line under words	Word/ phrase repeated
/ SC	Self –corrected: Student self-corrected the error
Word written above text	Replaced the word in the text with the word written above
/ - word crossed out or X	Did not read word or punctuation
P	Pause between words
De-press-ion - dashes between letters	Sounded out the word
Curved arrow	Skipped punctuation/ paragraphing and read on into next line
//	Stopping point

Figure 4: Takeelah's Coded Text, January 2009



HERE WE GO AGAIN. We were all standing in line waiting for breakfast when one of the caseworkers came in and *tap-tap-tapped* down the line. Uh-oh, this meant bad news, either they'd found a foster home for somebody or somebody was about to get paddled. All the kids watched the woman as she moved along the line, her high-heeled shoes sounding like little firecrackers going off on the wooden floor.

Shoot! She stopped at me and said, "Are you Buddy Caldwell?"

I said, "It's Bud, not Buddy, ma'am."

She put her hand on my shoulder and took me out of line. Then she pulled Jerry, one of the littler boys, over. "Aren't you Jerry Clark?" He nodded.

"Boys, good news! Now that the school year has ended, you both have been accepted in new temporary-care homes starting this afternoon!"

Jerry asked the same thing I was thinking. "Together?"

She said, "Why, no. Jerry, you'll be in a family with three little girls . . ."

Jerry looked like he'd just found out they were going to dip him in a pot of boiling milk.

". . . and Bud . . ." She looked at some papers she was holding. "Oh, yes, the Amoses, you'll be with Mr. and Mrs. Amos and their son, who's twelve years old, that makes him just two years older than you, doesn't it, Bud?"

"Yes, ma'am."

She said, "I'm sure you'll both be very happy."

Me and Jerry looked at each other.

The woman said, "Now, now, boys, no need to look so glum. I know you don't understand what it means, but there's a depression going on all over this country. People can't find jobs and these are very, very difficult

1/13/c

times for everybody. We've been lucky enough to find two wonderful families who've opened their doors for you. I think it's best that we show our new foster families that we're very . . ."

She dragged out the word *very*, waiting for us to finish her sentence for her.

Jerry said, "Cheerful, helpful and grateful." I moved my lips and mumbled.

She smiled and said, "Unfortunately, you won't have time for breakfast. I'll have a couple of pieces of fruit put in a bag. In the meantime go to the sleep room and strip your beds and gather all of your things."

Here we go again. I felt like I was walking in my sleep as I followed Jerry back to the room where all the boys' beds were jim-jammed together. This was the third foster home I was going to and I'm used to packing up and leaving, but it still surprises me that there are always a few seconds, right after they tell you you've got to go, when my nose gets all runny and my throat gets all choky and my eyes get all sting-y. But the tears coming out doesn't happen to me anymore, I don't know when it first happened, but it seems like my eyes don't cry no more.

Jerry sat on his bed and I could tell that he was losing the fight not to cry. Tears were popping out of his eyes and slipping down his cheeks.

I sat down next to him and said, "I know being in a house with three girls sounds terrible, Jerry, but it's a lot better than being with a boy who's a couple of years older than you. I'm the one who's going to have problems. A older boy is going to want to fight, but those

A portion of Takeelah's reading of this text would have sounded like this (the entire reading is in Appendix E):

Here we go Here we go again we're all standing in line waiting for breakfast when one of the cas-workers caseworkers came in and tap-tap-tapped down the line. Uh oh, that meant bad news, either they found a foster home for somebody or somebody was about to get… p – piled.

This Miscue Analysis will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

The Miscue Analysis helped to illustrate a student's reading process – whether the student ignored or self-corrected errors, whether he or she ignored punctuation, or whether or not the syntax and semantics of the reading were correct. I created a chart in which each student's error types: syntax, semantics, or visual errors were compared. The first Miscue Analysis helped me determine the types of reading errors each student made and helped me inform the mentors of specific areas of instruction for the student. The number and types of errors made were recorded on a chart for each student. Finally, a comparison chart was created in which all students' Miscue Analysis data were compared. I completed these steps for the second Miscue Analysis as well. The two comparison charts are included in Appendix F. Examining the student comparison charts helped me determine the similarities and differences between types of errors students made, and the changes in students' reading accuracy and comprehension over time. This information aided me in better understanding the types of errors students made and in beginning to develop an understanding of possible causes for each type of error.

Table of Themes

My final step was to create a table to record all of the emerging themes that had become evident through the data analysis (Table 4, Table of Themes). The table allowed me to determine whether or not each emerging theme was evident in multiple sets of data, in order to better triangulate the data. For the Likert scale, surveys, interview, and STAR Reading test, I recorded the number of occurrences of each theme. The numbers on the table indicate the number of students indicating each theme. Unlike those data, in which there was one response per student and the number of students indicating each theme was very clear, the number of emerging theme occurrences illustrated by other data were less clear. Because there were more than a dozen record sheets and responses per student, multiple mentor journal entries per student, over 175 photographs, and multiple observations per student, determining the number of occurrences of each theme was less viable in these data. Therefore, when charting these data, I indicated each emerging theme with an 'x' on Table 4 if the theme was clearly evident from the data. In order to analyze the data further, I examined and discussed each theme in relation to my initial research questions, and then discussed themes that clearly emerged but were not related to initial research questions. These themes will be discussed fully in Chapter Five.

Table 4: Table of Themes

Themes	Likert Scale	Survey 1	Survey 2	Student Interview	Miscue Analysis	STAR Reading	Photos	Student Record Sheets	My Responses	Observation	Mentor Journals
Needs quiet place to read	7	10	9								x
Reading is social	10		2	2			x			x	x
Topic is important to enjoying reading	13		4	1			x	x	x	x	x
Action/ suspense important to enjoyment			6	2							
Sounding out words is important		1	5	4				x		x	
Fluency/ sounding good is important to reading well		1	6	1				x			x
Understanding/ comprehension is important to reading		4	9	6	x						
Use of reading strategies			8					x	x	x	x
Important to read often	10		8								x
Student enjoys reading	10/ 2*	3	10	5						x	x
Student doesn't enjoy reading	2/9 **	7	3	1							x
Books are available and accessible to student	11		14				x			x	x
Improvement in using strategies after BRP			7	12						x	x
Improvement in overall reading as result of BRP			9	12	x	8				x	x
Dr. Seuss read to them as a child		6		6							
Few memories of being read to before school		6		8							
Remember learning to read was difficult				7							
No memory of learning to read				5							
BRP has improved reading comprehension			7	6	x					x	x
BRP has increased desire/ motivation to read			10	3						x	x
Reading to/ helping someone else valuable			12	12							x
BRP enjoyable				14			x			x	x

* On the statement "I like reading" 10 students selected agree or strongly agree, but when asked about reading in comparison to other activities, only 2 students indicated that they liked it.

** On the statement “I like reading” only 2 students indicated disagree or strongly disagree, but in relation to other activities, 9 indicated that they did not like reading much

Chapter 5: Findings

Emerging Themes and Research Questions

I will address the themes that emerged from the data in the context of my initial research questions, and will also discuss themes that emerged that were not anticipated. First, the data indicated that the 'real reading' skills of some of the students who participated in the Buddy Reading Programme did improve in a variety of ways. Second, following the programme, the data indicated that students were more motivated to read and that they were better able to discuss books they enjoyed. Third, taking on the role of a teacher seemed to improve the confidence and motivation of the middle school students. The data suggest that the Buddy Reading Programme did seem to improve the fluency and reading rates of the middle school students. However, the recorded books and technology did not seem to be a motivating factor for the middle school students. Some additional outcomes suggested by the data were that the students did not have many books in their homes and were not read to regularly from a young age. Half of the students remembered specific instances of having difficulty learning to read. The data also suggested that as a result of the programme, the students began to develop a personal preference in reading material. Students also found reading to be social, in that they enjoyed discussing books with others, but the actual act of reading was intensely personal. Each of these themes is discussed more fully below.

Question 1: To what extent and how does a Buddy Reading Programme help struggling readers improve their reading skills?

The data indicate that the Buddy Reading Programme did improve students' reading skills. 'Real reading' is comprehensive and includes elements of phonemic

awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Carson, 1999; NRP, NICHHD, 2000; Perkins and Cooter, 2005; Tatum, 2005; Smydo, 2007). 'Real reading' requires readers to infer and think about text at a higher level, as opposed to answering low level comprehension questions. This lower level of comprehension was not addressed in the instruction of the Buddy Reading Programme, but rather higher levels of thinking and reading were emphasized (Pressley *et al*, 1996; Rasinski, 2003; Tatum, 2005). Mrs. D wrote of Takeelah, "*we...had a good discussion about the characters, the topics, and the situations*" and a few weeks later that she, "*compared/ discussed how this book related to some of the other Civil Rights books she's read"*. One week when Mrs. G was struggling to know how to help Shawn, I responded to her by suggesting, "*work toward higher level thinking questions, such as 'Why do you think...?' Have him generate his own questions too. Another thing to work on with him is predicting"*.

In the initial survey that students took, one student mentioned sounding out words, one mentioned that fluency was important, and only four mentioned that it was important to comprehend a text. This seems to indicate that the students were not fully aware of the purpose of reading and had no paradigm for reading well. The Buddy Reading Programme provided instruction in 'real reading' and changed the students' perceptions of what real readers do. In their final interviews at the conclusion of the programme, twelve of the fifteen students in the programme indicated that they felt that their overall reading skills had improved as a result of participating in the Buddy Reading Programme. Twelve of the students mentioned specific strategies that they used in their reading, including visualizing, predicting, chunking parts of unknown words, and attention to fluency and expression in their reading. Stephanie discussed that she had

learned it was important to comprehend a text and had developed some 'fix-up strategies' explaining, "*I learned to slow down more and like go back and reread so I can understand it.*" Tierney explained that working with her mentor had caused her to improve her reading fluency:

> *I usually just read plain but [my mentor] forced me to read like with sound and, like, you know what I mean. Like when there was an exclamation mark she made me read it like they would with like emotion and stuff.*

Corey said, "*I know all the reading strategies now and can put them into use. Going back, like making predictions, going back if I don't understand anything".* Tabby mentioned that because of participating in the Buddy Reading Programme she was reading more and that she was using strategies to help her comprehension. Here, she specifically mentions visualizing:

> *I can read bigger, harder books than I could last year. [The] Twilight books made the difference – because they have like a lot of big words and they're really descriptive so it's easy to picture them.*

In April, Corey's mentor wrote, "*he made some predictions that were actually very good".* Mrs. H said of Jasmine,

> *She did try to pronounce words that were longer and would correct herself at times. She seems to think in-depth about the story and imagine herself in the character's place. She has good predictive thoughts and often will predict what might happen next.*

Working out unknown words was an important new skill (Ehri, 2005) that several students mentioned learning as a result of the Buddy Reading Programme. Tonya indicated that chunking words (Nagy *et al*, 2006) helped both her and her buddy work out unknown words:

> *I would take my fingers and I'll split up the words but [my buddy has] gotten better by taking her fingers and sounding it out by herself…I learned like if I'm reading a book then I can, like, if I can't figure out a word in the book that I'm reading then I can take two fingers and split them up like I do with [my buddy].*

Likewise, Shawn said, "*I can read bigger words, longer bigger words".*

Madalyn contrasted the way she read in the past with the way she reads now as a result of participating in the Buddy Reading Programme. She indicated that her reading had improved

> *'cause usually if I didn't understand a words I would just skip over it and just use the words after it to understand. Now I sounds out the words, and find out what they mean and how to say it right.*

In mid-March, I noted in my field diary,

> *Today Shawn had a 'substitute' buddy. They used magnetic letters to work on words from the book that [the buddy] didn't know. Shawn showed him how to chunk and sound out the words.*

Oakhill *et al* (2003) explain that phonological awareness is essential to decoding. From the students' statements above, it seems that phonological awareness, and especially the ability to chunk words (Nagy *et al*, 2006) was lacking from the middle school students' repertoire of strategies. Early in the year, Mrs. D wrote that Tonya, "*tends to fill in words she knows when she doesn't immediately recognize a word. She doesn't carefully sound out the word".* This supports Stanovich's (1986) argument that decoding skills are underdeveloped in struggling readers. As they taught their elementary buddies to chunk words and attend to morphemes, the older students learned specific strategies that aided them in decoding with automaticity. In March I noticed Madalyn teaching her buddy to attend to morphemes. In my letter to her I wrote,

> *I saw some good things in your work with K. You helped him figure out some words and made him reread to make sure things made sense. You also made him look back at the word (poke) and asked him if he saw an "ing" on the end, and made him figure out the correct word. This was a good strategy.*

A few weeks later, I wrote to Kelsey,

> *When you were working on magnetic letters with him, I noticed he got stuck on some words. If he doesn't know how to spell them, ask him how it starts and have him sound out the first letter to start.*

Activities such as using magnetic letters and Twist-A-Word specifically targeted word parts in isolation. This skill was then transferred to reading the texts in context.

During the final interview, six of the students specifically mentioned monitoring their own comprehension to make sure the text made sense (Palincsar and Brown, 1984). Mentors noticed an improvement in students' comprehension as well. In April, Mrs. G wrote of Shawn,

> *...we talked about the story.. he did better with a little more explanation. He even related something from the story to his life and seemed pleased that he could use something from the book. YEA!!*

Tabby's mentor wrote, *"Today we discussed what we had read [from]* <u>*Hoot*</u>*. She seemed to comprehend everything that she read and did good retelling the story".*

The initial survey suggests that most of the students did not consider comprehension, fluency, or determining unknown words important to reading. And indeed, many struggling readers do not realize that reading should make sense. The difference in students' perception of what reading is, changed considerably during the year. Using strategies and attending to meaning became important.

Mentors also indicated an improvement in students' use of strategies, reading fluency, and comprehension as the programme progressed. Mrs. W wrote that Stephanie, "*does correct herself when she skips a word or does not say it correctly"*. From my own

observations of the students as they worked with their first grade buddies, I noticed an increase in the students' ability to assist their buddies in reading fluency and comprehension by teaching the children a variety of reading strategies. After one buddy session in March I wrote to Jasmine,

> *I noticed something really good this week as you worked with D. Before you ever opened the book, you showed him the cover and asked him the title. This is a great way to get him focused on the book. Looking at the cover and title also helps us as readers to make predictions about what the book will be about. This was a great strategy!*

Just as Palincsar and Brown (1984) and Good and Ley (2002) found, as the students taught the strategies to someone else, their own ability to use the strategies improved. Asking the first graders, simply, "Did that make sense?" showed that the older students were paying attention to whether their buddy's reading of a text was correct and led to meaning making. This simple question also guided their own reading. For many of the older students, this metacognition was a new concept. But as Kintsch (1998) explains, reflexive thinking is essential to the development of a mental model. Developing a mental model is aided by drawing upon background knowledge, and this leads to greater comprehension (Pressley *et al,* 1996). Barton (2000) and Ivey and Broaddus (2001), likewise, found that reflection led to greater comprehension in students. Teaching students to ask the question "Did that make sense?" provided a strategy for them. Allen (2000) and Brownell and Walther-Thomas (2000) found that teaching students to reflect on specific strategies was beneficial in leading them to greater understandings and increased their overall reading skills.

Students in the programme began to articulate their use of strategies both as they taught their buddies and in their own personal reading or reading for class. According to Jasmine, she knew the Buddy Reading Programme helped her

> *because I'm understanding books better. Because I can tell some of what I had read in the book and like what happens and all the stuff. Like the main idea of the book… Um… ooh, it taught me to 'ax' more questions about what I didn't understand.*

This suggests that Jasmine transferred what she learned through the Buddy Reading Programme to other reading. Several other students indicated this same transference of skills. Because Jasmine and the other students were thinking reflexively about their own reading they were better able to transfer their new knowledge to classroom tasks. Supporting the students in this way led to increased reading skills (Vygotsky, 1987).

In their journals, several of the mentors noted that they noticed an improvement in students' comprehension during the year. They evaluated this by periodically stopping and asking the student to retell what had been read. As the student's comprehension improved, so did their retellings. Kelsey found that working with her mentor

> *just helps me understand and want to read. Helps with comprehension. Cause like [my mentor] asks me questions about [the book] and stuff. While I'm reading [she] like, stops me and asks me questions and it just helps me.*

Both mentors and students noted that as they worked together the students paid more attention to the actual text and made fewer errors while reading. Students found that they began to be more attentive to the text as they read on their own. Takeelah explained,

> *I think the Buddy Reading Programme has… helped out my reading because of reading with someone else, and when I read out loud [my mentor] notices this,*

> *like if I skip a word or read it wrong, she catches that. So when I read by myself I look back and make sure that I read it correctly*.

This reciprocal nature (Palincsar and Brown, 1984) of the Buddy Reading Programme may have been a factor leading to the overall reading improvement that the students reported. As Beck *et al* (1983) and Palincsar (2009) found, dialogue aids in reading instruction. As the students and their mentors talked about texts, the students seemed to become more attentive to the text itself. This may be because the discussion required the students to attend to the text and make meaning for perhaps the first time, which may have led to increased interest in the text. I have often found in my classroom that students enjoy read alouds and are willing to discuss these texts, but are less interested in discussing texts they read independently. This may be because as struggling readers, unaware that texts should make sense, they do not attend to the meaning, and therefore the text is uninteresting to them. But with the support of a read aloud or a mentor, they are more able to make meaning. The social nature of reading with a mentor may also have motivated the students and led to greater thinking about the texts. Mrs. D wrote that Takeelah,

> *is reading <u>My Mother the Cheerleader</u>. This is the book I began reading with Tonya and was so drawn in I checked out a copy and read the entire book. Takeelah said that she had started the book a few years ago, but hadn't finished it... We completed three short chapters and had a good discussion after each about the characters...[and] the history of desegregation.*

Many students' made reading improvements during the year. Data from the Miscue Analyses confirmed this improvement in reading throughout the year. Students, in general, improved in the number of miscues they made, most dramatically, Tabby who reduced her number of miscues from 19 to 11 and while Tonya's accuracy rate improved

by only one percent, moving her from the instructional level to the independent level, the difficulty of text she read increased three grade levels. Students' attention to the text seemed to improve, as evidenced by the improvement in self-corrections made. At the end of the programme, nine of the students self-corrected approximately half of the miscues they read while they were reading the text. The first Miscue Analyses showed eight of the students self-correcting only one quarter or better of the miscues they read. This suggests that at the end of the programme, the students paid more attention to the words in the text and to whether or not the text made sense as they were reading it. In addition, the Miscue Analyses indicated that the students' comprehension of the text they read improved during the year because of an overall improvement in their retellings and more accuracy in their inferring. For example, on Tonya's first Miscue Analysis of a 4th grade level text, which she said was "*a little hard,"* when she retold what she had read, she said,

> *Um...I guess there's this guy who lost his wife and son. Ana called him and said to come to the apartment... I guess she showed him that plants were dying because there was no water for four days.*

On a more difficult text at the end of the year, she was more confident. Her retelling of the piece was more accurate, except for a misunderstanding of an idiom,

> *Jerry and Bud are going into foster homes. Bud has to go with a twelve year old son and Jerry has to go with three little girls. He thinks that...(confused voice) they're going to dip him in a pot of boiling milk?*

But Tonya realized that the text did not make sense in this spot. Because the goal of reading is to comprehend (Rasinski, 2003) this seems to indicate a significant improvement in the students' reading skills.

On the initial Miscue Analyses, students' accuracy rate ranged from 93 percent to 98 percent. One third of the students read below 95 percent accuracy. Texts read with between 90 and 94 percent accuracy are in the students' instructional range (Carver and Leibert, 1995; Rasinski, 2000). The remaining ten students read the texts with 95 percent or higher accuracy, indicating that the texts were at their independent reading level. Three of the students, however, read a text that was at least two years below their actual grade level. On the Miscue Analyses at the end of the programme, all students but one read on level texts, and accuracy rates ranged from 94 to 98 percent. Only two of the students read with 94 percent accuracy. The remaining thirteen students read with 95 percent or higher accuracy. This suggests that during the Buddy Reading Programme the students' reading accuracy improved, even for some who faced more difficult texts.

In the first Miscue Analysis I conducted with Takeelah in January 2009, shown in Chapter 4, she read the text with 94 percent accuracy and made five self-corrections, mainly based on meaning. However, of her twenty-two miscues, five led to a partial meaning change and nine lead to a more significant meaning change. In several instances her miscues did not make any sense, for example when she read "somebody was about to get piled" instead of 'paddled'. In January she did not correct many of her errors that led to a meaning change in the text. In her May reading, however, Takeelah only made one miscue that led to a major change in meaning and two miscues that led to partial meaning changes. This suggests that she became more attentive to making sure her reading of a text made sense than she had earlier in the year.

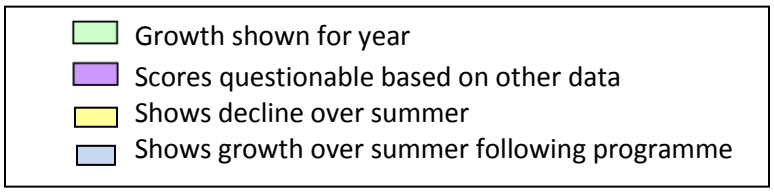
The STAR Reading test provided quantitative data regarding students' progress throughout the year (see Table 5). Of the fifteen students who participated in the Buddy

Reading Programme, eight showed an improvement in their scores from Autumn 2008 to Spring 2009 (including Corey whose scores were questionable during 7th and 8th grades), three showed a decrease in scores, and data were incomplete for three students. Some of the increases were not significant, such as Chanteria, whose score rose from a 4.2 to a 4.4. Tabby's increase from 5.3 to 8.5 and Shawn's increase from 3.4 to 6.0 were more significant and indicated more than one year's worth of growth. However, Shawn's spring score was still more than a year behind his chronological grade level. Only Corey, Kinsey, and Tabby's spring scores indicate reading levels at or above grade level. However, only six of the students' spring scores were below the middle school range (6.0-8.0), while in the previous autumn nine students had been below 6.0.

Table 5: STAR Reading Test Grade Equivalent

* Blank spaces – no data available

Student	Autumn 2006	Winter 2006/ 2007	Spring 2007	Autumn 2007	Winter 2007/ 2008	Spring 2008	Autumn 2008	Buddy Reading Programme Began – Oct. 2008	Winter 2008/ 2009	Spring 2009	Autumn 2009
	6th grade			7th grade			8th grade		8th grade		8th grade (retained)
Jasmine		5.6	5.2	5.5		7.2	9.1		6.6	7.3	n/a
Takeelah		5.3	5.1	5.2		6.4	7.6				n/a
Tonya	3.3	2.9	3.9	3.1	3.3	4.2	3.9		3.1	3.8	5.0
Chanteria		4.5	3.2			4.9	4.2		4.4	4.4	n/a
Corey		6.7	6.2	9.6		12.9+	8.6		12.9+	12.9+	n/a
Madalyn		4.6	3.5	3.7		3.5	5.5		6.0	5.6	5.4
Trent	3.0	2.6	2.5	3.6	3.8	3.6			5.3	3.8	n/a
	5th grade			6th grade			7th grade		7th grade		8th grade
Shawn	3.3	4.3	6.2	5.8	5.3	6.2	3.4		5.4	6.0	8.3
Stephanie	4.1	3.5	5.2	5.8	6.6	7.7	6.7		7.3	5.8	7.0
Tierney	4.0	3.0	4.2	4.8	4.3	5.6	4.7		5.8		6.1
Kinsey	5.1	6.2	5.2	5.9	7.1	6.7	6.4		6.1	7.7	6.3
Savannah			6.0	6.6	6.6	6.6	5.2		6.3	6.3	5.7
Kelsey	2.7	5.2	5.8	5.6	5.0	5.6	5.7		5.6	6.2	4.7
Tabby	3.3	2.6	3.8	4.5	4.9	4.0	5.3		5.6	8.5	5.1
Kynzee	2.5	3.2	3.2	2.9	3.4	3.7	2.4		3.4	2.7	4.2



The scoring of the test suggests that in one school year students would be expected to improve one grade level, a score of +1.0. However, this is often not the case. For comparison, I examined the STAR Reading test scores of a random sample of twelve students who were not in the Buddy Reading Programme. For the purpose of comparison, I asked the Media Specialist to randomly select 10-15 students who had the same English teachers as the students in the programme, but to remove their names before giving their scores to me. The scores for this sample of students for one year are in Table 6.

Table 6: Autumn to Spring STAR Reading Test Scores of Non-Participants in Buddy Reading Programme

	Autumn	Winter	Spring	Autumn-spring change
Student A	4.7	4.1	5.0	+.3
Student B	6.0	6.8	7.3	+ 1.3
Student C	5.3		6.5	+1.2
Student D	8.1		8.8	+.7
Student E	8.0	7.6	6.1	-1.9
Student F	5.2	4.1	6.2	+1
Student G	4.8	3.6	3.5	-1.3
Student H	5.7	5.6	4.5	-1.2
Student I	7.8		7.3	-.5
Student J	6.8	8.6	8.6	+1.8
Student K	4.2	3.7	4.4	+.2
Student L	4.4	5.5	4.6	+.2

Of the twelve students in the random sampling, eight students made some improvement and four did not improve. The range of student scores for those not in the programme was -1.9 to +1.8; while the range of the student scores for those who participated in the Buddy Reading Programme was -1.4 to +4.3. For those students who improved, the improvement of those not in the programme ranged from .2 to 1.8; while the improvement of those in the programme ranged from .1 to 4.3. The average score of the

students not in the programme was +.15 while the average score of the participants was +.91. These data seem to suggest that although this standardized test is gauged for one year of progress during one school year, in reality, students' scores are not this consistent. These data also seem to suggest that as a group, the students who participated in the Buddy Reading Programme made more substantial gains than the students who did not participate.

To further analyze the STAR Reading Scores, I conducted a Z-test comparing the scores of the participants in the Buddy Reading Programme and the group of students who did not participate to see if the scores were significantly different. First, I eliminated students with incomplete data sets, in order to conduct a more accurate test. This gave me data for 12 students in the programme and 9 students not in the programme. Using formulae in Excel, I calculated the mean scores for all of the tests for each group. The participants' mean score was 6.0 with a standard deviation of 2.3; while the control group's mean score was 5.5 with a standard deviation of 1.5. Next, I calculated the Z-scores for each individual student, for each of the three tests, using the formula Z= n-m/sd (number – mean/ standard deviation). Finally, I calculated the combined mean Z-score of all students for each of the three sets of test scores.

The mean Z-scores for the autumn, winter, and spring tests for students in the Buddy Reading Programme were -0.2, 0.02, and 0.18 respectively. For the control group, the Z-scores were -.005, -0.02, and 0.02 (See Table 7). Based on the mean Z-scores, the students in the Buddy Reading Programme performed better on the STAR Reading test; however, with such a small number of students, the results are not statistically significant.

Table 7: Mean Z-Scores

	Mean	SD	Autumn Mean Z-score	Winter Mean Z-score	Spring Mean Z-score
Participants	6.008	2.337	-0.203	0.021	0.182
Non-participants	5.541	1.516	-0.005	-0.020	0.024

It is interesting to note that in autumn following the Buddy Reading Programme, five of the ten students who took the test did not succumb to the summer reading slump (Kim, 2004) even though all five had 'slumped' the previous summer. This may indicate that those five students read over the summer, further developing their skills as 'real readers', although that is beyond the scope of this study. And while the Buddy Reading Programme is likely to have led to an improvement in the 'real reading' of these students, the spring to autumn scores cannot necessarily be attributed to the students' participation in the programme, as this was not examined in this study.

Although I do not know whether or not Shawn read during the summer following the programme, I did notice a change in his attitude toward reading. When he began the Buddy Reading Programme, Shawn did very little reading, explaining that he had other things to do. However, during the autumn following the Buddy Reading Programme, he chose to participate in a book club during his enrichment period, and encouraged two friends to join the book club as well. In the book club, the students read the same book and met periodically to discuss what they had read. This book club was one more way for Shawn to join the reading club (Smith, 1992).

One point that should be made about the STAR Reading test scores is that the final test was administered in May, just a few weeks before the end of the school year, and was the 31st day of standardized testing that the students had completed during the

2008-2009 school year. They had already completed two state assessments, each lasting more than a week, three predictor tests lasting several days each, and STAR Reading and STAR Math tests twice previously. In general students were 'burned out' from over-testing, so the validity of the test scores is somewhat questionable. Because Sewell *et al* (2007) found the results of the STAR Reading test to be as accurate as other reading tests, and this is the reading test that the school corporation has chosen to administer, it seems reasonable to accept the scores as inconclusive, while still acknowledging the fact that the students had been over-tested during the school year.

Question 2: What is the relationship between motivation, attitude, and improvement in reading?

The data seem to suggest that motivation and a positive attitude toward reading do lead to an improvement in reading. The literature supports this, suggesting that choice of materials, classroom environment, working with peers, and conversations all motivate students to read more (Koskinen *et al*, 1999; Rasinski, 2000; Friedland and Truesdell, 2006; Paquette, 2008). At the beginning of the programme, I administered a Likert Scale and a questionnaire to determine students' attitudes towards reading. The Likert Scale led to mixed results about students' attitudes toward reading. Within the scale itself, individual students reported both liking and disliking reading. The students' questionnaires seemed to be a more reliable measure of their attitudes because the answers were more consistent with what students said and with what was observed about their reading behaviours and attitudes. On the initial survey, eight of the fifteen students indicated that they did not like reading; three said they liked reading sometimes; and three gave no indication either way. This particular finding seems to suggest the opposite

of what Thomas (2009) suggested about Likert scales being valuable for determining initial attitudes because at least on the statements about liking and disliking reading, the students' responses were inconsistent. However, on other questions, the Likert Scale and the questionnaire yielded more consistent results, suggesting that there was some value in the Likert Scale.

On the initial survey, when asked about a specific favourite book title, two students listed Dr. Seuss books, six students listed books that had been read aloud by a teacher or read in class, and only five listed a specific title that had been independent reading; although two of these students' responses were texts that were well below grade level. This might suggest that the students in the programme valued being read to more than they valued independent reading. It also may suggest that when the students reached middle school they were less likely to find books on their own that they enjoyed than when they were younger.

In general, middle school students often report that they do not like reading, (Beers, 1998) so these findings are not unusual. Later in the year, many students reported a specific book they liked that had been read to them by a teacher or suggested to them by a teacher or their mentor. Kynzee did not like reading, but she did indicate that an adult had made some impact on her reading. A book she had enjoyed was

> *A Child Called It and um… somebody readed it to me … it's been a while… [We] read as a class in 6th grade, and then I read it by myself because I enjoyed [it].*

In my own classroom teaching, I have found that helping a student find a book he or she likes early in the year leads to more reading throughout the year. One of the

purposes of the Buddy Reading Programme was to provide students with positive reading experiences that would improve their attitudes towards and engagement with books.

By the time the students completed the second questionnaire in January, ten reported that they enjoyed reading, while only three said they did not enjoy it. During the final interview, although it was not specifically asked, five students discussed enjoying reading as a result of participating in the Buddy Reading Programme, including Kynzee who said she was now "*reading more outside of school*". Only one student, Tierney, specifically mentioned disliking reading. When discussing her dislike of reading, Tierney mentioned that her library book was overdue. At Woodview Middle School if students have a book that is overdue or lost, they are not permitted to check out any more books until the book is either returned or paid for. For many students, especially those who move frequently or have lost books, this makes books inaccessible. According to Tierney,

> *[I] don't like reading to myself. … I started* Bud not Buddy *in ABC when I got in trouble. My library book is overdue. In ABC listened to the CD and the book. But another time when I was in ABC I couldn't remember where I left off at.*

(The ABC room is an in-school detention room.) Tierney went on to explain that she "*liked the CD because it made the book easier to read*". Tierney's attitude was very different from Takeelah who in her final interview said:

> *I think my reading's improved a lot. I didn't like to read at the beginning of the year. I thought it was dreadful. Now I read through a book in two or three days and then reread if I think I missed something. Before I read a book and was like "Ok, now I'm done". I think it's just reading more and reading books I like. Before I just picked up a book and now I find ones I think I'll like. I read* <u>The Watsons Go to Birmingham</u> *and I really liked that book, so I started picking more books like that. I liked them and got through them quicker so I started picking books like that. [My] favourite book is the one I'm reading now,* <u>The Voice that</u>

> Challenged a Nation. *I started reading last night and couldn't stop. I'm almost to the end. It caught my attention and I just couldn't stop reading it.*

Both of the books Takeelah mentions here are related to the Civil Rights Movement. In total, she read at least five books on the Civil Rights Movement, including nonfiction, biographies, and historical fiction during the last few weeks of school. Voracious reading and reading many books on a topic of interest are characteristics of real readers. For Takeelah, working with her mentor to find books that she enjoyed reading led her to a new love of reading.

Kelsey also discussed the importance of finding the right book:

> *If I find.. it depends what book it is. Like, I don't know… I like adventure books and stuff. [I like]* The Little Princess*, the one I'm reading right now,* Tiger Eyes*, and… what's it called..* The Giver*.*

Like Takeelah, Kelsey began to articulate the types of books she liked. Finding the right book improved her reading experience. The results of the initial Likert scale also support the idea that the book and topic are important to reading enjoyment. Thirteen of the fifteen students indicated that the book's topic was important to them on the Likert scale, although this was less prominent on later questionnaires and interviews. However, the mentor journals and my observations indicated that the topic of the text was important. Mrs. W wrote, *"Savannah completed the book Abduction, to my surprise!... She picked out a new book by Peg Kehret".* And Mrs. H wrote,

> *I discovered [Chanteria] loves to play softball so I ordered three books for her. She read the first one today...She read it quite well...She read with enthusiasm and for meaning...Her problem is she decides she doesn't like the subject, so she dismisses it entirely,*

which also indicates that while a topic of interest may motivate a student, uninteresting topics may be demotivating. Data from the photos that is especially interesting was from a day that Takeelah and Madalyn worked together with their buddies. The previous week Takeelah's buddy, who was a boy, selected a nonfiction book about spiders. He wanted to make a spider web, so the next time they met, Takeelah brought in a ball of yarn. Madalyn's buddy wanted to read the same book about spiders, so the foursome read the book together. They paid special attention to the illustrations and text about spider webs. Then the four used the ball of yarn and some tape to create a spider web. This text was especially motivating to the boys. When I wrote to Madalyn that week, I complimented her on the activity.

> *I noticed that when you were making the spider web this week, you used the book to ask questions. This was a good idea. It helped the boys keep focused on learning, and not just on making the web. I was impressed that you used the book in that way.*

Because of the first graders' excitement, the older girls were also motivated to read the text and to extend it. 'Real readers' are excited about texts. After reading, they want to share good books and learn more about the topic. Through their participation in the Buddy Reading Programme, discourse about books became a normal topic for the students. They were engaged in 'real reading' activities and began acting like 'real readers'. When Stephanie began reading <u>New Moon</u>, Mrs. W noted that she hoped Stephanie would discuss it with Savannah, who was also reading it. She did. In mid-March I wrote of the girls reading the Twilight series, "*Once they start talking [about <u>Twilight</u>]I can't get them to stop! It's a great problem when kids <u>want</u> to talk about books!"*

On the second questionnaire, which was administered in January, ten of the fifteen students in the Buddy Reading Programme indicated that they enjoyed reading. Thirteen of the students identified a specific title they had read since the Buddy Reading Programme began that they enjoyed. Thirteen students indicated that they were more motivated to read as a result of the Buddy Reading Programme. Several of these titles were books that they read with their mentors. Shawn said his favourite book was Notre Dame vs. Michigan: College Football's Biggest Rivals because it was about his favourite football team, Notre Dame. He surprised even himself by going on to say that something he had learned about reading this year was "*it's kind of fun?!?"*

During the year the students participated in the Buddy Reading Programme, the middle school students began to develop their own tastes in reading, a characteristic of a real reader. Although this emerged from the questionnaires, interviews, observations, and photos, it became most clear through the mentor journals. In the spring, Mr. C wrote, "W*e discussed What Daddy Did and why Corey enjoyed it so much. He said he figured out that he likes drama and suspense."* As the students worked with their mentors they discussed their interests. For Kynzee this was basketball; for Chanteria it was softball; for Takeelah the Civil Rights movement; for Trent sports and humorous books like the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series; for Tonya, Tabby, Savannah, Stephanie, and Kinsey it was Twilight, along with mystery and romance. The mentors helped the students find books related to their interests and taught them how to find interesting books on their own. This development in reading interests seemed to lead to increased reading (Ivey and Broaddus, 2001; Cole, 2003; Phelps, 2005: Palincsar, 2009). As the students began to recognize their own tastes in books, they found more and more books that they enjoyed (Sanacore,

1999; Thomas and Wexler, 2007; Reis *et a*l, 2008). This increased the number of successful and pleasant reading experiences the students had, which in turn, seemed to lead to more reading (Stanovich, 1986).

Increasing pleasant reading experiences through helping the students find books they enjoyed reading was a major task for the mentors to complete during their sessions with the students. I carefully monitored the mentor journals and suggested book titles that the students might be interested in based on their personal interests and other books they had read. After helping the student find a book, the student and the mentor read together, decided how much they would each read for their next session together, and then discussed what they had read. Because the mentor also read the book, the student and the mentor had real conversations about books. My observations indicate that 'real readers' share favourite books with someone else and want to discuss the books they have read. But this is something that struggling readers rarely have the opportunity to experience. The mentoring component of the Buddy Reading Programme gave students the opportunity to engage in real conversations about books, just as real readers do. It also added a social dimension to the reading. These conversations were much more motivating than the multiple choice tests the students had to complete throughout the year (Harlen and Deakin Crick, 2002). Regular discussion of books seemed to motivate the students to read even more.

It seems as if the self selecting of books is an important factor in motivation to read books and enjoyment of books. The data suggest that self selected reading leads to positive reading experiences, which leads to more reading, and to improvement in reading. As Corey stated, a person "*has to read a lot to get better*".

Many of the students in the programme did indicate that they had started reading more. Kinsey explained,

> *Um, yeah… 'cause I read a lot more than what I used to. Yesterday I got grounded and I was mad so I stayed in my room all day and read a whole book. It's called* Freak.

She then discussed the book with me. Several of the students who were not in my language arts class began asking if they could borrow books from my classroom library, which I happily allowed. This led to more talk about books in the school, because before long students who I did not know were asking to borrow books from my classroom library. This supports Stanovich's (1986) idea that those who read more become better readers and are more motivated to read.

As I observed students it became obvious that they were becoming more motivated to read as the year progressed. Twilight and the other books in the series became popular during second semester, and especially after the first movie was released. Several girls in the Buddy Reading Programme began reading this series. In the mornings before school, five or six of the girls in the programme began gathering outside my classroom on an almost daily basis. They discussed many of the books they were reading, and especially the Twilight series. There was much debate between the girls as to whether Bella should love Edward the vampire or Jacob the werewolf and I learned more about this series of books than I cared to know. Despite my personal distaste for all things vampire, I was delighted with the conversations.

For this group of girls, reading had become social and reading the series was a way to stay connected with friends and be part of the conversation. The girls had 'joined the reading club' (Smith, 1992) through this series. This particular group of girls also

read and discussed other books including Peg Kehret's Abduction and Cages. Their conversations, happily, did not end with Twilight. Stainthorp (1989, p. 72) suggests that "children should begin to read a series of books where they can identify with the characters and care enough to read more books about them". This group of girls grew as readers through their conversations and their interaction with these series. Through their conversations, these girls were demonstrating the NCTE's (2007) assertion that adolescent reading is a social activity. Barton and Hamilton (2000, p. 8) suggest that "literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices". I watched throughout the year as more students read this series of books in order to meet their personal goal of entering into the conversation. The students were constructing group knowledge through their discourse with one another and building upon this knowledge with more reading and more discussion. Worthy and Broaddus (2002) suggest that these conversations also demonstrate comprehension. Without comprehension, the students could not discuss the books, and conversely, the conversations lead to greater comprehension. Pressley *et al* (1996) suggest that discussion should be part of effective comprehensive balanced literacy instruction. These girls transferred the types of discussions they were having with their adult mentors to their own reading practices.

It seems likely that an increase in motivation did lead to an increase in reading and in reading ability. The STAR Reading test scores improved for many of the students in the programme, and there was an overall increase in students' reading fluency and reading rate (Rasinski, 2000, 2003; Hasbrouck and Tindal, 2006), which will be discussed more fully later in this chapter. Because more reading leads to better reading

(Stanovich, 1986) and success leads to more motivation to do a task, these data, along with the qualitative measures, suggest that as the students found books they enjoyed reading, mainly through working with their mentors, their motivation to read increased.

Several elements of the Buddy Reading Programme may have led to the increase in students' motivation that the data suggested. First, students were reading younger children's books, with which they could feel successful, leading to intrinsic motivation (Ivey and Broaddus, 2001; Clark and Rumbold, 2006) and which, according to Zambo (2005) are engaging and motivating in themselves. Worthy *et al* (1999) suggest that reading easier texts could increase students' motivation to read. The children's books that were part of the Buddy Reading Programme gave students the opportunity to feel successful – a reading experience that many of the students had not previously encountered in their usual school reading experiences. Several of the elements Biancarosa and Snow (2006) suggested, including direct instruction in comprehension, collaboration, a variety of texts and extended literacy time, were aspects of the programme. These aspects, additionally, are all elements of comprehensive balanced literacy instruction, which is effective for students. Selection of texts is an essential element in motivation (Tatum, 2005; Phelps, 2005; Palincsar, 2009). The students had the opportunity to self select essentially all of the texts that they read during the programme, and as Shawn mentioned, this was especially motivating to him, *"I get to choose my own books, which is good"*.

Another element that motivates students is a literacy rich environment (Koskinen *et al*, 1999; Cole, 2003). Although this was not specifically addressed by the data, it is likely that the classroom environment where the buddies met motivated the students. The

presence of a variety of reading materials, rugs, bean bags, pillows, and couches made the environment inviting. Read alouds, which Carbo (1995) and Trelease (1995, 2006) have found to be motivating, were a staple of each buddy session.

The students were also motivated because they took on the role of a mentor. Jasmine explained, *"I like helping my buddy. When he doesn't know a word we go over it and try to figure it out. And it was fun."* The role of mentor has been shown to be motivating in many content areas (Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Friedland and Truesdell, 2006; Galton and Hargreaves, 2009; Paquette, 2008). The elements that motivated the students in the Buddy Reading Programme to read also led them to a feeling of success. This success led to motivation to read (Stanovich, 1986) which led reciprocally to more reading and increased motivation. The reciprocal nature of reading and motivation to read is an important aspect of 'real reading'.

Question 3: How does working with a younger student affect an older student's attitude and motivation toward reading?

The data suggest that taking on the role of the teacher motivated most students in the Buddy Reading Programme. As they taught reading skills through reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984) they felt successful in their reading and became more motivated to read themselves. Reading became a social activity in which the students created meaning through conversation (Grasser *et al*, 1994; Fisher, 2008). These meanings went beyond the confines of the text itself. Developing a social context for reading is especially important for adolescent readers (NCTE, 2007). By observing the students and examining the photos of them working with their buddies, it was clear that the middle school students took pride in teaching the children and enjoyed the social

interaction. As is the nature of first graders who are just learning to read, progress in reading is rapid (Ehri, 2005). In most cases, the older students could see the progress in their buddy's reading over a few weeks' time. As they worked to help their buddy learn new strategies, they felt successful. During second semester, Tierney wrote of her buddy, *"I'm so proud of A. She can read the green dotted books by herself."* A few weeks later she wrote, *"I think she's going to be a good reader. I'm proud of me and her."* This feeling of success motivated them to want to read more (Stanovich, 1986) and helped to combat the negative feelings toward reading that many had previously felt (Dean and Trent, 2002). Mrs. G reported noticing this in her work with Shawn. In November she wrote, "*Shawn is really a challenge! Nothing appeals to him and he just doesn't want to read!"* During second semester, however, she noticed a change in Shawn. "*He really beamed"* she wrote after one of their meetings together. Shawn's English teacher noticed that he was reading more nonfiction, which suggests he was learning which types of books he enjoyed. As Friedland and Truesdell (2006) explain, the students were more likely to participate in other reading activities because they felt successful.

Wasik (1998) found that buddy partnerships that were more structured led to more reading success. In the Buddy Reading Programme, student interactions, while allowing for choice, were structured and the students received feedback from me on their interactions. One week Takeelah and her buddy were doing a sentence building activity. When I wrote to her that week, I gave her a tip for this activity,

> *One thing I noticed was that he wrote the sentence "His baseball is orange". While this does work as a sentence, it doesn't really make sense, since we know that baseballs are white. It's important to teach him that his writing should make sense. So ask him, "Does that make sense?" "What would make more sense?" This is an easy way to help him revise his writing, and also to teach him that writing should make sense.*

This type of direct instruction may have led, in part, to the overall success of the programme and specifically to the middle school students' motivation and feelings of self-efficacy.

Several students noted that teaching strategies to their buddies also helped them to become stronger readers themselves. Jasmine explained,

> *My buddies, like they were… the way I taught them how to uh, [sound] out words it also helped me. Um.. by like words I don't know I'll like try to say it ..out loud and not try to do it in my head so I'll know what it sounds like and if it doesn't sound right I know it's not the correct word.*

Jasmine learned new strategies for decoding words through the Buddy Reading Programme. Early in the year, decoding had been a major challenge for her. Besides saying words aloud, she also mentioned chunking them into parts to try to decode them.

On both the second questionnaire and the final interview, twelve of the fifteen students indicated that they thought helping a child learn to read was a valuable element of the Buddy Reading Programme. Chanteria explained that the Buddy Reading Programme "*actually helped me by working better with little kids. Like doing stuff with them and reading to them."* Kynzee added, "*It was enjoyable for me 'cause like, I don't have little brothers and sisters I can read to and every week I can read to somebody smaller".*

Working with the young children motivated the middle school students even more than I anticipated. The students in the programme were excited to come to my classroom for the Buddy Reading sessions and felt privileged. Mrs. A wrote of Tierney, *"She says she was glad to be chosen".* Each week when the first graders arrived at the middle

school, it created excitement in the building. Many weeks students who were not in the programme came to me asking if they could join.

Another result of the programme that I had not anticipated was that the middle school students became more interested in their younger family members. Savannah explained,

> *it's starting to get me to read more to my little sister since she's only in Kindergarten. Used to she asked me to read to her and I wouldn't. But since reading to the 1st grader I'm starting to read to her more…[I'm] realizing that since she's only in kindergarten she can't read all that great.*

Stephanie added that she had started reading to her three and six year old cousins as a result of the programme. For Savannah and Stephanie, the reciprocal nature (Palincsar and Brown, 1984) of the Buddy Reading Programme and the emphasis on reading aloud (Trelease, 1995, 2006) became valuable elements of reading. Both girls chose to transfer these elements to other reading situations.

During the final interview, fourteen of the fifteen students in the programme said that the Buddy Reading Programme had been enjoyable for them. The mentor journals, student record sheets, observations, and photos also supported this. In February, Mrs. W noted, *"I do get the feeling that Stephanie enjoys reading with her first grade buddy"*. Kelsey wrote, *"I'm enjoying working with D. He is improving on reading bigger words and writing them...He likes when I read to him."* Corey added, *"I have been enjoying this time"*. The students were engaged in working with their buddies and looked forward to the sessions. Jasmine explained that "*The programme was pretty good. [The best part was]… um reading with the buddies"*. Tierney especially benefitted from working with her buddy, and sometimes with two or three buddies. In April she wrote, *"Mrs. Dewing,*

I love being able to work with two book buddies. It seems we are able to have more fun with two. Thank you." When one of the middle school students was absent, some took two buddies for a week. Many of the students struggled with this. I had observed, however, that Tierney worked well with two and used activities that got both students involved.

Shawn, who was typically reclusive from his peers, smiled several weeks into working with his buddy. I noted, *"Wow! Shawn is having fun and he's smiling!"* It was the first time I had ever seen him smile. A few weeks later I noticed that Shawn's buddy was imitating him. "*When Shawn yawned, D yawned. When Shawn rested his head on his hand, so did D.*" At the end of the programme, Shawn said the Buddy Reading Programme was a *"good experience … [to] get to meet with first graders and talk with them… making a new friend*".

The photos also revealed that the older students enjoyed working with the younger students. The photos showed the middle school students being engaged, showing concern for the buddies, playing with them, and listening to them. In one photo, I observed that Chanteria's buddy was curled up next to her on a beanbag. One of the most surprising things in the programme occurred around the fourth time the students met with their buddies. The first graders had made necklaces out of macaroni and yarn for the older students. All of the older students wore their necklaces during the buddy session that day. However, many of the students continued to wear the necklaces throughout the school day. Another teacher in the building reported that several of the girls in her class had been wearing the necklaces and were bragging about them. Even Corey, the American football player, wore his necklace all day. I never expected thirteen

and fourteen year olds to wear macaroni necklaces in front of their peers! This may show that the older students had made a strong connection with their buddies and that this relationship was important to their feelings of success as a reader. This supports Barton and Hamilton's (2000, p. 13) assertion that literacy is "realized in social relationships". The middle school students face social interactions daily, and before participating in the Buddy Reading Programme, many of their classroom interactions with their peers reinforced the idea that they were poor readers: they decoded poorly and stumbled over words when reading aloud, they were uninterested in books, and they rarely discussed books with others. The Buddy Reading Programme seemed to lead to more positive social interactions revolving around literacy. The middle school students felt privileged to be part of the programme and felt successful as they participated in it. Wearing macaroni necklaces may have been one way they demonstrated this positive literacy experiences to their peers.

On both the second questionnaire and the final interview twelve of the students in the Buddy Reading Programme reported that helping someone else learn to read was a valuable experience. Jasmine explained, *"I think [the Buddy Reading Programme] should continue because it helps younger kids and also the older kids"*.
She recognized that she was learning both from the reciprocal teaching she was doing with her buddy and from the instruction she was receiving from her mentor. Madalyn also recognized the two tiers of learning that occurred in the programme:

> *It's a lot of fun and I would hope it would continue for a long time 'cause you're helping out someone else. First of all you're helping a kid be more interactive with an adult or their elders. You're helping them sound out words, say it right, put in meaning and stuff.*

Tabby reported that the programme had benefitted her in a completely non-academic way:

> *… I guess it's helped me get some of my patience together because I'm not really a patient person… I lose my temper really easily when something bugs me. I'm better at holding my temper. I don't go off on as many people so much. … I don't know, actually. It just helped a lot.*

Tabby's bad temper and attitude was something that was observed throughout the year by me, her mentor, and her teachers. In February, her mentor noted, "*The session started out sort of rough...Every question I asked her, she answered with 'I don't know'. It was like pulling teeth."* Tabby's attitude was often displayed in her complete unwillingness to complete any assigned task. This did improve throughout the year, although it was a very gradual change and there were many days that she was very difficult to work with. Most of her teachers finally gave up on her and put their energies into helping other students who were more willing to work with them. I did see some success with Tabby near the end of the year however. She was one of the students who read and discussed Twilight and became a voracious reader. By the end of the school year, she had raised her grades and earned passing grades in every class.

The data suggest that working with the younger children did motivate the older students. The students seemed to read more and had better attitudes in general about reading. This suggests that taking on the role of a teacher provided positive reading experiences for the older students. Through their training and through working with their buddies and their mentors in the Buddy Reading Programme, the older students built on what they already knew and were stretched to read more proficiently (Vygotsky, 1987).

As Stanovich (1986) and Garton, *et al* (2009) suggest, these positive experiences may have led the older students to more reading and improved attitudes.

Question 4: How does practising and reading aloud children's books affect the fluency of a struggling reader in middle school?

Rasinski (2000, 2003) suggests that repeated readings do increase the fluency of readers. As students practised reading books before recording them for the buddies to check out and take home, they focused on reading fluently. After a few rehearsals, it seemed as if the students did not struggle to decode the texts and were better able to concentrate on adding expression. This rehearsal led to improved reading, as Stanovich (1986) suggests. Several of the students also reread books when they worked with their buddies, and the buddies quickly found favourite books that they wanted to hear multiple times. According to Trelease (1995, 2006), this development of favourite titles and repeated readings is an important step in the development of a real reader.

Fluent reading was a major focus of several of the mentors. As they worked with the students, the mentors modelled and taught fluent reading and encouraged the students to read more fluently as well. During their first session, Stephanie's mentor wrote, *"Stephanie reads quite fast and not very smooth, so I really modelled fluency and expression"*. In January, however, she wrote, *"Stephanie did so much better slowing down when she read"*. Late in the year Kinsey explained, "*If I say a word wrong I always go back and re-say it"*. She learned that self-correction improves oral reading fluency.

On their second questionnaire, only six of the students mentioned that fluency was important to reading. However, in their written record sheets from working with

their buddies, fluency and the way the buddy sounded when reading were frequent topics of discussion. Tonya noticed that her buddy was improving at "*reading and saying words"*. Chanteria worked with her buddy on *"pausing when there's a period at the end of a sentence"*. Savannah wanted to help her buddy *"slow down when reading"*.

The Miscue Analyses demonstrated an improvement in student's fluency through the year. In the text that the students read for the Miscue Analysis, there was a frequently made error that demonstrated an inattention to punctuation in the passage. The passage read:

> *Jerry asked the same thing I was thinking, "Together?"*
> *She said, "Why no, Jerry, you'll be in a family with three little girls…"*
> *Jerry looked like he'd just found out they were going to dip him in a pot of boiling milk.*
> *"… and Bud…," She looked at some papers she was holding. "Oh yes, the Amoses, you'll be with Mr. and Mrs. Amos and their son who's twelve years old, that makes him just two years older than you, doesn't it Bud?"*
> *"Yes, ma'am"*
> *She said, "I'm sure you'll both be very happy."*
> (Curtis, 1999, p. 2)

Students often ignored the punctuation and paragraphing between the dialogue, reading the end of the first line as "Together she said" and the last two lines as "Yes, ma'am she said" Of the 25 times this text was used for a Miscue Analysis, this particular error was made nine times, and was made both in January and in May, although only once made both times by the same student. Additionally, two students, Shawn and Takeelah, read it as "'Together?' he said". This error is different from the first and is actually a more sophisticated miscue. The first error demonstrates a lack of attention to the punctuation and paragraphing, but also less attention to the meaning of the text. The second error demonstrates that the students knew that Jerry was the one asking the question and inferred that Jerry was "he" and was different from the person who replied,

"Why no, Jerry". Although this seems obvious to proficient readers, it shows an important step in these students' reading improvement. Graesser *et al* (1994) explain that inference leads to comprehension. Shawn and Takeelah's inferences about this passage demonstrate their comprehension of the passage. By adding "he said" Shawn and Takeelah demonstrated that they were working to make meaning as they read. The question "does that make sense?" that they were encouraged to ask their buddies may have also been in their heads as they were reading.

In addition to an improvement in reading with expression, students' reading rates improved during the year, as evidenced by the recordings of the students' Miscue Analysis readings. Tonya indicated that the Buddy Reading Programme had helped improve her reading rate, which transferred to reading in class. According to Tonya,

> *It's like every time that I read I get a little bit more faster too. If I read more, then the more that I read, like together in class, then I know some of the big words and I can stay along with the class.*

In Chapter 2, I discussed the impact of reading rate on overall fluency. Although it is only one measure, reading rate does seem to have an impact on fluency and overall reading skill. (Hasbrouck and Tindal, 2006). For reference, here again is Table.1 that Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006) suggest for determining proficient reading rates and grade levels:

Table 1: Proficient Reading Rates

Grade	Autumn	Winter	Spring
1		23	53
2	51	72	89
3	72	92	107
4	94	112	123
5	110	127	139
6	127	13	140
7	128	136	150

7 – 75 percentile	156	165	177
7 – 90 percentile	180	192	202
8	133	146	151
8 – 75 percentile	161	173	177
8 – 90 percentile	185	199	199

(from Hasbrouck and Tindal, 2006, p. 639)

According to Table 1, if the students were proficient readers, they would be reading approximately 136-146 words per minute (wpm) in the winter and approximately 150 wpm in the spring when reading at grade level texts, with a rate of about ten words above or below the 50th percentile target demonstrating adequate progress. Of course, the students in the programme were not proficient readers. As shown on Table 8, when the first Miscue Analysis was conducted, only six of the fifteen students read within the target range. The reading rates of the students in the Buddy Reading Programme ranged from 88-184 words per minute, with an average of 139 words in 7th grade, and from 98-159 words per minute, with an average of 127 words in 8th grade. Although there is quite a range of reading rates in both grades, the averages placed the 7th grade students right at the 50th percentile and the 8th graders well below the 50th percentile in the winter. When the second Miscue Analysis was conducted, two students read between 140 and 160 wpm. An additional five students read within a higher percentile range, while four students were within seven words of the 140 wpm mark, indicating that they were closer to the average rate than they had been earlier in the year. Table 8 illustrates the reading rates of the students in the Buddy Reading Programme during their initial and final Miscue Analyses, as well as the actual grade level of the text the students' read.

Table 8: Students' Reading Rates

January Miscue Analysis				**May Miscue Analysis**		
Student	Text Grade level	# of words read	Reading rate (wpm)	Text Grade level	# of words read	Reading rate (wpm)
Jasmine	7	375	98	7	339	108
Takeelah	7	416	106	7	339	138
Tonya	4	289	127	7	339	133
Chanteria	7	375	107	7	339	104
Corey	7	416	166	7	339	170
Madalyn	7	375	159	7	380	157
Trent	4	289	130	4	319	144
Shawn	7	339	139	7	380	188
Stephanie	7	380	155	7	339	175
Tierney	7	339	158	7	242	171
Kinsey	5	384	184	7	339	190
Savannah	5	258	128	7	339	138
Kelsey	7	339	130	7	339	134
Tabby	7	339	88	7	339	102
Kynzee	7	339	132	7	339	126

Twelve of the students in the Buddy Reading Programme made an improvement in their reading rates. The three students whose reading rates decreased fell by only two to six words. Seven of the students increased their reading rate by ten or more words per minute. Although the students were also in an English and a language arts class during the school year, activities which build fluency, such as rehearsal of texts, rereading, and performing texts (Rasinski, 2000) are rarely offered in secondary classrooms. Secondary classrooms also offer little opportunity for students, especially struggling readers, to read texts at their independent reading level, which also builds fluency. Although some progress in reading rate is normal during a school year, the Buddy Reading Programme seems to have contributed to additional increases in reading rate. Catts and Kamhi

(2005) point out that even if struggling readers can decode on grade level, their reading rate is often deficient.

It is also worth noting that Tonya, Kinsey, and Savannah increased in reading rate while also increasing in the grade level of the text they read by two or three grade levels. In addition, while Shawn made a dramatic increase in the words read per minute from 139 to 188, a difference of 49 words per minute, his reading of the text was too fast to be fluent. This can be contrasted with Kinsey's reading. Although her actual reading rate was slightly faster than Shawn's it did not feel as fast, as a listener, because of her reading prosody.

Because reading rate is a factor in prosody and fluency (Hudson *et al,* 2005; Penner-Wilger, 2008), these data suggest that students' reading fluency improved during their participation in the Buddy Reading Programme. An improvement in fluency is a significant element of reading and allows students to concentrate on their comprehension (Rasinski, 2000; Worthy and Broaddus, 2002). As several of the students explained in their final interviews, they did pay more attention to comprehension and made a greater effort to use strategies to improve their comprehension even further. In addition, fluency is a characteristic of a strong reader (Hudson *et al,* 2005; Reis *et al,* 2008), so an improvement in fluency suggests an improvement in the students' strength as a reader.

Although the data seem to suggest that the students' fluency did improve, it is unclear whether this is specifically a result of classroom instruction, reading children's books that are easier to read, being involved in more reading activities, or the direct instruction in fluency provided by the students' mentors. However, the increases in reading rate do seem to indicate an improvement is students' reading fluency.

Question 5: How do recorded books and current technology benefit the reading skills and motivation of struggling middle school readers in one community?

This question was not addressed fully by the data I collected during the research study and no clear answer to this question emerged from the data analysis. The only source of data I have to answer this question is observations. During buddy sessions in December and January the middle school students selected two or three books to practise, read, and record for the buddies to check out. Then students came to my classroom during their study hall to record the books using an iPod and digital voice recorder. Because the iPods were a popular technology and at this time just beginning to become common among the middle school students, I anticipated excitement over using this technology. There was some excitement from the students, but much less than I anticipated. About six of the students did come in to practise and record their books. These students, especially Tabby, worked to make sure the recording correct and even made several recordings until the reading was correct and fluent. Chanteria made several recordings over a two week period but deleted them all, never making a recording she was satisfied with. Many of the students never completed their recordings. So the iPod technology alone did not seem to motivate the students.

However, as the technology was somewhat new to me as well, there were several technological issues that we faced along the way. First, the compatibility of the iPod with the school's computer hardware was an issue; even through I had researched the best methods of digital recording and found iPods to be effective for recording in school settings (Farivar, 2004; McQuinn, 2005; Stephens, 2005; Brisco, 2006; Skouge *et al*, 2007; Lack, 2008; Levin, 2008; Pratt, 2008; Ray, 2008). The technology department was

unwilling to allow me to download iTunes onto my school computer. Therefore, rather than teaching the students to download, name, and burn their own recordings to a CD, I completed these tasks at home. This decreased the learning and interaction that students had with the iPods and may have decreased their enthusiasm as well. A second problem with the technology was that students struggled with managing the digital recorder and microphone and turning the pages in the book. On several occasions, the students bumped the microphone as they were turning pages, which made the recording unusable. Many students lacked the patience to rerecord the books until they had made a usable recording.

In total about forty books were recorded and made into CDs to be checked out along with a text copy of the book. In order to have enough books for the first grade buddies to make choices, I recorded many of the books myself. I added a brief introduction to each recording in order to provide some background knowledge and to focus the child on the book before reading it. The students who did complete their recordings were excited when the books and CDs were ready for check out and encouraged their buddy, at least once, to check out the book they had recorded. The recorded books did seem to motivate the elementary students who were eager to check out new books, listen to their older buddies reading, and read the books throughout the two weeks between sessions both at school and at home. Their teacher reported that these books were frequently used in the classroom listening centre and were the most popular books the students read during the year.

It is unclear whether recording the books improved the motivation and reading skills of the older students. In the future, I would make audio books of middle school

level books available for the older students to borrow and read. This would give a better indication of whether recorded books were motivating for these students.

Other Themes

Read Alouds, Availability of Books at Home, and Learning to Read

As I analyzed the data several other themes that were not related to my main research questions emerged. In the final interview, eight of the students in the programme indicated that they had no memories of anyone reading to them before beginning school. This was similar to the results of the initial questionnaire, on which six students indicated that no one had read to them before school. Six students on the initial questionnaire and during the final interview indicated that they had memories of being read to before school, the texts most often mentioned were The Cat and the Hat and Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss. These books include a rhyming pattern and some nonsense words. At least some portion of these books can be recited by most Americans. Tierney explained that when she was in kindergarten and first grade *"I never read. I didn't ever read except for Dr. Suess.* Green Eggs and Ham*. I didn't like no other books.*" Takeelah had especially fond memories of Dr. Seuss books.

> *When I was like four I memorized* The Cat in the Hat *book. I swore I could read it. My grandpa read it to me so much. I knew a few words and could remember the rest. My grandpa read to me a lot because my sister and I were really close in age so he read to us all the time.*

Jasmine added, "*Oh, the book I read like a million time that I likes was* Green Eggs and Ham*"*.

While some of Dr. Seuss's books include important themes, the two mentioned by the students in the interviews are mostly considered to be nonsense books. One student

each also mentioned the Franklin series and the Clifford series as books that were read to them, although Tonya remembered Clifford from preschool rather than from home. The lack of books in eight of the homes and the limited variety of books in the other six homes may account for some of the reading struggles the students faced in middle school. Reading aloud to children instils a love of reading and typically leads to more reading (Stanovich, 1986; Trelease, 1995, 2006). Wide reading leads to improved reading skills. Stephanie, who reported being read to as a child, found learning to read "*pretty easy*". She explained,

> *Learning for me really wasn't that hard… My grandma used to read to me a lot and just watching her [helped me]. [I] learned [to read] before school. When I started school I was reading bigger books. Just like books teachers picked out. [I] liked it.*

Seven of the students in the programme indicated that learning how to read was difficult, and an additional five had no memory of learning to read. Trent said learning to read was *"kinda hard sometimes, saying the words and understanding them"*.

Takeelah remembered learning to read as a competition between her and her sister who is fifteen months younger.

> *I remember like I would get certain words confused like "of" and "or". It was so hard. I thought they were like just the hardest words to pronounce. I remember my sister started reading a lot before me. She read a lot and really fast. She learned to read when she was really little. It made me so mad. She learned to do everything before me so I wanted to learn to read before her but she beat out of that too.*

But Takeelah recognized that after participating in the Buddy Reading Programme her own reading had progressed more than her sister's reading and that she was making more progress. "*Now she doesn't like to read but she likes to write a lot.*

She doesn't catch on as fast as when she was little. I think I catch on to stuff faster than when I was little." Takeelah noticed a change in her own reading as compared to her sister's. Her sister, who "*doesn't catch on as fast,"* is likely to be less motivated to read because she does not feel as successful at it (Stanovich, 1986) as she did previously. A feeling of success is essential to the intrinsic motivation necessary for increased reading achievement (Ivey and Broaddus, 2001; Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Because Takeelah was feeling more successful in her reading than when she was younger, she was more motivated to continue reading.

Madalyn had negative memories of learning to read. For her, learning to read meant learning "*um… how to sound the words out. [I] just remember my teacher calling us and telling us to sit on the chair and sound out a word. It was hard."* She admitted that reading has always been hard for her.

When I asked Kelsey her memories of learning to read she smiled and laughed.

> *I struggled. I never took time to sound out the words and stuff. I always gave up. And then … I don't know. The [first grade] teacher helped me and then I started doing it. [But I] didn't like reading.*

Jasmine remembered some struggles with reading, but the change in her reading ability as she progressed through the grades was especially poignant. When she first learned to read in first grade, she concentrated on

> *breaking up words. …like I had to learn my ch's from my s's. Yeah, it was like some words I, like, ch's and s's I'd pronounce the word wrong. [Back then] I thought I was a pretty good reader. … um I think it slowed down a little because in the summer I wasn't really reading. I read a lot of books but I didn't think it was like my best reading. Because like, I think, like, the way I caught on the words was slow. Like in first and second [grades] it was easy, but in fourth and fifth [grades] it got a little slower.*

Fourth grade is a time that older struggling readers often begin to fall behind their peers. At this age, students begin to read more nonfiction texts, especially textbooks, and fewer narrative texts in school. The skills necessary for reading and comprehending textbooks are different from those needed for narratives. Struggling with this transition in reading tasks is fairly common.

Kynzee also remembered learning to read as a struggle. She explained

> *that I had to um… like after I read I had to retell my parents what I read about because I had trouble comprehending. Like in second and third grade. Reading was difficult… that I... I couldn't, like, comprehend what I read.*

I found it interesting that so many of the students remembered specific errors and specific problems that they had in learning to read. This suggests that is was especially memorable to them and impacted their lives.

Social and Personal

Another interesting theme that emerged from the data was the idea of reading being both social and personal. On the Likert scale, ten students indicated that reading was a social activity and they enjoyed discussing books with a friend or an adult. This fits with Smith's (1992) assertion that learning is social. Although it was not specifically asked, on both the second questionnaire and on the final interview two students each indicated that they enjoyed the social aspects of reading with someone else or discussing books with someone else. The photos, my observations, and the mentor journals also indicated a social aspect to reading. The students' discussions of books with each other, especially the Twilight and Abduction series, also supports the idea that reading is a social activity. This idea is further supported by the NCTE (2007) report which suggested that adolescents, especially, enjoy discussing books.

Several of the students in the programme listed favourite books as ones they had read with their mentors during the year, such as Corey's interest in Artemis Fowl. This may be because as they read with their mentor they had someone to discuss the book with, and this lead to deeper thinking about and interacting with the book. The discussions with their mentors led to 'real reading', rather than the lower level comprehension test-type questions which are demotivating (Harlen and Deakin Crick, 2002). This seems to fit the theme that reading is social in nature.

Additionally, the photos of the middle school students working with their buddies revealed a social aspect of reading. Relationships between the middle school students and the first grade buddies were developed through books. Books were shared and recommended by the older students and the younger students alike. As the vignette of Madalyn and Takeelah creating a spider web with their buddies indicates, the children wanted to share books with each other. Another popular book among the first graders was one called Rattlesnake Dance. In my field diary one week, I wrote,

> *Madalyn and her buddy read the book* Rattlesnake Dance *by Jim Arnosky. The book tells how to do the dance. I happened to be walking by as they were doing the dance. They both got up and were moving around and following the directions in the book.*

The day that Madalyn, the cheerleader, and her buddy read and acted out the dance, this book became instantly popular and was selected by one pair of buddies almost every week after that. On her own, Madalyn certainly would not have stood up and done a 'rattlesnake dance' but with her buddy this was perfectly acceptable. The social context affected the literacy that occurred.

Although literacy was demonstrated to be a social activity, students indicated that their reading was also very personal. Seven students on the Likert Scale, ten students on the first questionnaire, and nine students on the second questionnaire indicated that to read they needed quiet. The students said that reading was most difficult when the environment was noisy and several said they preferred reading alone at home to reading at school. Several mentors also noted that the students were easily distracted from their reading if there was noise in the hallway or other people around. Mrs. G noted that the week they read together in the back of the library, Shawn was "*surveying the area as if I [was] not talking to him... he seemed distracted"*. This may indicate that the students were still concentrating on decoding and working at comprehending as they read, and as a result may have felt self-conscious. Because the reading strategies were fairly new to most of the students, they could not yet use them with automaticity. Small distractions disturbed their work of reading. This suggests that readers need silent time to read independently, followed by time to discuss their reading with others.

Real Reading and Test Scores

The data collected during the year long Buddy Reading Programme seem to suggest that the 'real reading' of the student participants did improve through the programme. The students improved in their skills that are directly related to the five pillars of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (NICHHD, 2000), through reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984), and through working with their adult mentors. In addition, interviews, observations, and mentor journals seemed to demonstrate that students improved in the social aspects of reading, their enjoyment of reading, and their enthusiasm and motivation

for reading. These elements can eventually lead to the formation of life-long readers (Trelease, 1995, 2006). Most of the students' reading rates showed improvement, and their test scores showed an overall improvement in reading, perhaps suggesting that 'real reading', which leads to comprehension at Kintsch's (1998) abstract level, can also lead to an improvement on testable low level, or literal, comprehension questions. This suggests that comprehensive literacy instruction is likely effective in both developing 'real readers' and in improving test scores. (Carson, 1999; Fitzgerald, 1999; Horowitz, 2000; Perkins and Cooter, 2005; Tatum, 2005; Smydo, 2007). As Horowitz (2000) suggested, an effective intervention programme includes the elements of comprehensive balanced literacy instruction.

One to One Experiences

Other important themes that emerged include the social aspects of reading. Learning to read and continuing to read is a social activity. Early reading in the home and the reading 'lap time' seem to be important elements in the development of successful readers. As Trelease (1995, 2006) suggests, children who are read to before they begin school have positive experiences with reading prior to the 'work' of reading beginning in school. As demonstrated by the students who participated in the Buddy Reading Programme, a lack of this early reading time leads to more difficulty in learning to read, which often continues into the upper grades. Working with a younger child and working one to one with an adult mentor may have helped simulate the experiences that these children missed at a younger age. Through the Buddy Reading Programme, the middle school students experienced the pleasure of 'real reading', perhaps for the first time.

Self Selecting Books

The students in the programme also had the opportunity to select their own books for their own purposes, a behaviour of 'real readers'. When students are given this opportunity to self select their reading materials, they are more interested in reading (Koskinen *et al,* 1999; Rasinski, 2000; Friedland and Truesdell, 2006; Paquette, 2008). Shawn said the best part of working with his mentor was "*I get to choose my own books, which is good*". Through working with their mentors, the students began developing and articulating their personal reading tastes, just as real readers do.

'Real readers' are motivated to read, able to find their own reading materials, engage in texts, share texts with others, use a variety of reading strategies, and work to comprehend the texts they are reading. The data suggest that the students in the Buddy Reading Programme began to develop the skills of real readers. Because the Buddy Reading Programme was comprehensive and balanced, it seemed to be effective for students. The Buddy Reading Programme taught students the skills and strategies that real readers employ and encouraged them in 'real reading' behaviours. These emerging findings will now be illustrated through three individual student vignettes.

Chapter 6: Individual Student Vignettes

Importance of the Social: Kynzee

Kynzee was a 7th grader who had never been in my class, but I did have both of her older brothers in previous years. Her 6th grade English teacher had told me that she was very pleasant and helpful but struggled with reading more than most students. Her 7th grade English teacher did not describe her as pleasant, but rather as difficult to work with, but did agree that she struggled with reading and recommended her for the programme.

On a written questionnaire given at the beginning of the Buddy Reading Programme, although she said she was a good reader and could find books she liked on her own, Kynzee had a negative attitude toward reading in general, stating that she did not like reading at all and felt that reading was not important.

Kynzee's first grade buddy was a boy named J who was difficult to work with. During their first meeting together, Kynzee read aloud the book If You Give a Pig a Pancake. J drew a picture from the book and wrote the words: table, tub, three, house. However on her log, Kynzee wrote the question "*How do I get him to write and not color all the time?"* I was surprised by her question because he had written some words which were appropriate for an early first grader. I reminded her that it was early in the year and that at this stage of learning, drawing based on books was acceptable. I made it a point, however, to watch Kynzee and J from a distance during their next meeting. I observed that J and Kynzee were sitting at opposite ends of the couch and J squirmed away from her. Kynzee was reading aloud a book about blizzards. J was reading a book about the sun and ignoring Kynzee. At one point he ripped a book from her hand. Kynzee

complained that J said "*I don't want to read*". This was likely because reading was difficult for J, so I suggested that Kynzee make a deal with him. First she would read aloud a book that *he* chose. Then they would choose a book together for him to read. I suggested a series of easy readers about a dog named Biscuit. If J read the book to her then he could choose to draw or to play a game. The week of the third buddy meeting, Kynzee did not come to my room. I assumed she was absent, until another student told me she was not. I found her later in the day and asked why she had missed her session. She told me she had to do a project during class and her teacher would not let her leave. However a quick check with the teacher proved this to be untrue. I caught up with Kynzee again after school while she was at cheerleading practice. Kynzee and I discussed how to set an agenda and be in charge during the sessions, and how to balance being kind with being firm about expectations and behaviour. My hunch was that Kynzee was frustrated with her buddy and that was why she had not come down. I later learned, however, that her best friend, who was also a buddy reader, was suspended from school that day. Although Kynzee never confirmed this, it is likely that she did not want to come down without her friend. The importance of the social aspects of reading came through clearly in the data collected (Cole, 2003; NCTE, 2007). For Kynzee, social interactions with her friends were important to participating in the programme.

During the fourth meeting, J and Kynzee sat next to each other in chairs at a table. Kynzee made this decision on her own. It was a good decision because it provided more structure and made it harder for J to squirm away from her. The fifth session was right before Christmas. The middle school students each gave their buddies a gift: a book and a small stocking with candy. This week, J cooperated with Kynzee as they read and

worked on a sentence building activity. The hands-on activity was good for him, and he hugged Kynzee when he left. This action demonstrated the social nature of literacy (Cole, 2003, NCTE, 2007). I wrote to Kynzee,

> *Wow! You and J hit it off this week! What do you think made the difference? Do you think he's just getting more comfortable with you? Sometimes it takes longer to bond with some people than with others. I noticed he was working well with you this week. I'm so glad!*

By the first meeting in January, J seemed to have transformed. He and Kynzee worked together well and were laughing and having fun together. Their sessions together went well through the first meeting in February. The first grade teacher was pleased with the pairing of these two students. She had had a lot of problems with J earlier in the school year and mentioned that his home life was difficult. She was pleased that he had bonded with Kynzee and was seeing improvement in his classroom work and behaviour. By mid-February, however, J had moved and was no longer attending the same school. Kynzee began working with a girl named D who was very quiet and shy – the exact opposite of J. D had just moved to the school and Kynzee met her on her second day there. The next buddy session, Kynzee did not come down once again. Kynzee worked with D only three times before the end of the school year. The sessions went well, although Kynzee chose to sit at a table with her best friend and her buddy, rather than working one to one with D.

For Kynzee, following through on a commitment was not important, but the social elements were essential. When Kynzee struggled to deal with J's behaviour, it was easier to avoid him by not coming to the buddy sessions, but when they worked well together she was motivated to work with him. After he moved, she was again unmotivated to

attend the Buddy Reading sessions. She either skipped the sessions or sat at a table with her best friend, so she could have some sort of social interaction during the sessions.

Kynzee met with her reading mentor, Mrs. L six times between November and March. Unfortunately, the two were not a good match and never bonded well. Kynzee employed reading avoidance behaviours, such as going to the restroom or her locker, regularly and Mrs. L allowed this. Kynzee also refused to go with Mrs. L on two occasions. In mid-January, about the same time things were going well with J, Mrs. L felt as if they had finally had a good session together. They read some articles about basketball from Sports Illustrated for Kids and focused on an article about a point guard, which was Kynzee's position on the school basketball team. This text seemed to motivate Kynzee, and brought her closer to finding more things she liked to read. The next time they met, they read from Sideways Stories from Wayside School by Louis Sachar. This book is the first in a series, which then could lead Kynzee to reading other books by Louis Sachar. Mrs. L noted, *"The chapters are short and funny. Kynzee enthusiastically commented, 'This is a good book!"*.

Although Kynzee and Mrs. L had two very positive meetings, Mrs. L decided to resign as a mentor in early March. Although she did not say it, I believe that her feelings had been hurt the times Kynzee had refused to work with her and she decided to no longer participate as a result. Unfortunately for Kynzee, this was shortly after J had moved.

Because of Kynzee's sketchy attendance at Buddy Reading sessions, I talked to her one to one several times throughout the year. Each time she assured me that she was glad she was in the programme. One time she even said, "*I feel so lucky to have been*

chosen for this," however her behaviour did not show this. In working with Kynzee, I wondered if I was dealing with a power issue (Elliott, 1991). Although Kynzee was not in my class, I was a teacher in the school, had taught her two older brothers, and it was likely that she would be in my class the following year. It is possible that this placed me, unintentionally, in a position of power over Kynzee, and as a result she told me what she thought I wanted to hear, rather than what she really thought.

At the end of the year during an interview, Kynzee said the Buddy Reading Programme

> *was enjoyable for me. Cause like I don't have little brothers and sister I can read to and every week I can read to somebody smaller.*

When asked if her reading had improved during the year she replied, *"Um-hum.. in like um… like me reading more outside of school. That's it.*" When asked if the Buddy reading Programme had helped her in any way she replied, *"Yes. Um.. cause I … (looks at ceiling, head tilted) I don't know, it just… just has".* Because of the power issues mentioned above it is questionable how reliable these answers are. However, on a written questionnaire in January, Kynzee's responses were somewhat more revealing. She stated that a good reader is someone who "*reads everyday",* that she likes reading when she is alone, that reading is easy when she "*can concentrate"* and hard when "*there is talking*" referring to reading in school. This gave a little more insight into Kynzee's reading. Her need for quiet in order to concentrate and her lack of reading in school could suggest that reading was still difficult for her, rather than an automatic function (Oakhill *et al*, 2003; Reis *et al*, 2008), or it may suggest that she did not want to read around others if her classmates did not enjoy reading. She wanted to fit in with her peers. Her assertion that she enjoyed reading to someone smaller supported my observations

throughout the year that reading was social for Kynzee (Barton and Hamilton, 2000; Cole, 2003; NCTE, 2007).

On Kynzee's first Miscue Analysis she read a 7th grade level text with 94 percent accuracy, which indicated that the text was slightly higher than her independent reading level. Kynzee made seven self-corrections. Of the remaining miscues, her syntax was acceptable for 70 percent of the errors, but the semantics was acceptable for only 40 percent. Garnham and Oakhill (1996) found that students who do not attend fully to syntax have trouble decoding, and therefore comprehending. Kynzee's errors in syntax may have led, at least in part, to her errors in semantics. Another issue Kynzee may have faced is that she did not read very much. Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) found that students who have limited exposure to print have a difficult time understanding syntax. These data may reinforce Kynzee's statement that she needs to be able to concentrate fully in order to read well. Reading, for her, had not yet become an automatic activity. Kynzee's second Miscue Analysis at the end of the year on the same text was slightly better. She read with 95 percent accuracy, placing the text within her independent reading level. Of her errors, four demonstrated appropriate syntax, while four did not. However, five of the eight errors demonstrated appropriate semantics. Although this is only a slight change, it does show some improvement in Kynzee's attention to the meaning of a text.

Kynzee's STAR Reading scores from 5th grade through 7th grade showed a range of reading levels between grade 2.5 and 3.7. During the year she participated in the Buddy Reading Programme, her grade equivalent rose from 2.4 in autumn to 2.7 in sprinng. This is not a large increase and demonstrates a reading level five years below

her grade level. However, in autumn of the following year, as an 8th grader, Kynzee scored at a grade equivalent of 4.2. This is the first time her reading had not declined over the summer and the highest overall score she had ever earned. Because she did not succumb to the Summer Reading Slump (Kim, 2004) during the summer of 2009, this may suggest that Kynzee read during the summer. Although her sessions with her mentor were not as positive as I had hoped, because her mentor focused on finding texts that Kynzee would enjoy, it is possible that Kynzee did read for pleasure during the summer. However I do not have any data to support or refute this inference. Kynzee demonstrates that the issues that struggling adolescent readers face are varied (Horowitz, 2000; Beers, 2003; Phelps, 2005) and that the social aspects of literacy are especially important to adolescents (Barton and Hamilton, 2000; Cole, 2003; NCTE, 2007).

Reading is kinda fun?!?!: Shawn

Shawn is a 7th grade boy who was extremely quiet and a bit difficult to become well acquainted with. At the beginning of year he was adamant about the fact that he disliked reading. Although he did not think reading was especially hard or easy for him, finding books he liked was a challenge. He said that he did not visit the library often and did not know where to find books he wanted to read. He believed that his teachers thought reading was important, however he did not feel that his teachers helped his reading skills.

Shawn's STAR Reading scores ranged between a 3.3 and a 6.2 grade equivalent between 5th and 7th grades. In autumn of his 7th grade year he scored a 3.4 grade equivalent. Shawn's STAR Reading scores dropped significantly over the summer between 5th and 6th grade and again between 6th and 7th grade. During his first Miscue

Analysis he read a 7th grade level text with 93 percent accuracy, placing it at his instructional level. Of the 24 miscues he made, he self-corrected 6. Of the remaining 18 miscues, 10 were not acceptable syntactically and half led to unacceptable meaning changes in the text. His retelling was very brief but he did understand the gist of the piece.

Each time that Shawn entered the classroom for a buddy session, he sat at the same table in the corner of the room, which was isolated from the other students. It did not bother me that he worked with his buddy in a corner, but I wondered why he did not interact with the other middle school students more. When Shawn worked with his buddy, K, they especially enjoyed written conversations and spent a lot of time talking about football and especially the Indianapolis Colts. Shawn used the written conversations to model correct spelling for K. When K wrote the question "*Do you love yr bud*r?" Shawn replied, "*I do not have a brother".* K was using invented spelling, which is appropriate at this stage. In his response, Shawn modelled the correct spelling. To continue working on spelling Shawn taught K words using rainbow writing and high frequency word flash cards.

By January things were going smoothly for the two boys. Shawn helped K use a Twist-a-Word block to create words. While they were doing this activity, Shawn noticed that K mixed up the 'Z' and 'Q' sound. He wrote to me, "*how do I help him learn Z and Q?"* I suggested practising and writing words beginning with each sound, such as 'zoo', 'zebra', 'zipper', 'quick', 'quiet', and 'quack'. I also suggested that Shawn point out that 'Q' is almost always followed by the letter 'u'. They worked on this the next week, and K seemed to no longer struggle with these sounds after Shawn taught them to him in

isolation. Shawn felt successful for having taught K this skill, and in mid-January I saw Shawn smile for the first time all year. He and K were working with the Twist-a-Word blocks and creating words with the same beginning and vowel sound and a different ending. Before that I was not really sure if Shawn was enjoying working with his buddy, but that day became a turning point for Shawn. After that, Shawn was always the first to arrive in the room on buddy meeting days. He still zoomed to his table in the corner, but he was always ready to begin work. By mid-February, Shawn noticed an improvement in K's spelling. They continued working with hands-on activities including magnetic letters and sentence building, but Twist-a-Word blocks remained their favourite. During their last meeting together, Shawn told me he had enjoyed the programme and working with K.

Shawn met with his mentor, Mrs. G, nine times during the school year. Between March and April they met regularly. Earlier in the year the meetings were more sporadic due to her schedule. At their first meeting in November, Shawn was reluctant to read and made sure Mrs. G knew he did not like reading. He chose a graphic novel. During their second meeting he chose a fiction book called Walk-on Quarterback. Although he was somewhat reluctant to read, he did read aloud with Mrs. G.

In mid-January, Mrs. G noticed the same positive change in Shawn that I had seen as he worked with his buddy. He had a much more positive attitude. On the questionnaire in January, Shawn wrote that something he had learned about reading this year was, "*it's kinda fun?!?"*. He was surprised to find that he was beginning to enjoy reading. He wrote that the best part of working with his mentor was, "*I got to choose my book wicth is good*". This supports what Fisher and Ivey (2006) found about the

importance of student choice. When students can choose their own reading materials, they are more likely to read. At the beginning of the year Shawn finished the statement "I like reading when…" with "*I don't like reading"* and the statement "Reading is hard when…" with "*I have to read*". In January these statements had changed to "I like reading when…" "*I have my own books"* and to "Reading is hard when…" he responded, "*not hard*".

In March, Shawn began meeting with Mrs. G more regularly. She noticed that he was reading very fast and as a result often skipped or misread words. Mrs. G met with Shawn in the back of the library that week. She reported that he often looked around to see who was there and was distracted. I think more than being distracted Shawn was feeling self-conscious about reading with someone in public, and I suggested that Mrs. G meet with him in another spot. I helped her find an area to meet where there would not be other people around. The following week he read more smoothly. During their last meeting together, Mrs. G reported that Shawn made a connection from the text to his own life. She began to ask him some higher level thinking questions, as I had suggested, beginning with "Why do you think…?" and "What might happen if…?" Working with Mrs. G and discussing books with her helped Shawn to internalize strategies and think at a higher level (Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Yuill *et al*, 2009)

At the end of the year Shawn said the best part of the Buddy Reading Programme had been getting "*to meet first graders and talking with them* and *making a new friend*". He said his time working with Mrs. G had been good, but he did not elaborate. Shawn felt his reading had improved during the school year "*cause I can read bigger words, longer bigger words*". Shawn maintained, however, that he would not be likely to read

for fun because he had other things to do like listen to his iPod and play guitar with his band.

In May, Shawn read a 7th grade level text with 94 percent accuracy. This was slightly higher than his reading earlier in the year. He self-corrected 6 of his 21 miscues. His reading rate increased drastically, although his reading was too fast to allow for prosody (Hudson *et al*, 2005). His summary of the text was stronger than it had been in the autumn, but not significantly so. On the STAR Reading test, Shawn went from a grade equivalent of 3.4 in autumn to a grade equivalent of 6.0 in spring. More significant however, is that in the autumn of his 8th grade year he scored a grade equivalent of 8.3. This was the first time that Shawn's reading score had not dropped over the summer, suggesting that he did read during that time (Kim, 2004). More interestingly, Shawn chose to participate in a 5 week book club that met during enrichment period during the autumn of his 8th grade year. Two of his friends also participated in the book club and read, discussed, and then watched the movie based on the book Stormbreaker by Anthony Horowitz. Reading became a social activity (Cole, 2003; NCTE, 2007). He may have benefitted even more from the Buddy Reading Programme if he had a male reading mentor. For many boys, reading is seen as primarily a female activity, and therefore one that they avoid, or at least want others to believe that they avoid (Trelease, 1995). A male mentor could have helped change this mind-set for Shawn. Although Shawn said he would not read on his own given the opportunity, the increase in his test scores (Kim, 2004) and his participation in a book club seemed to contradict this. Shawn was the most surprised of anyone to find pleasure in reading.

Multiple Reading Issues: Tonya

Tonya was in my class for both 7th grade and 8th grade English language arts. She was never a behaviour problem. She was compliant and did what was asked of her, although she often worked on tasks very slowly and rarely turned in completed assignments. At the beginning of 7th grade Tonya was a reluctant reader and rarely completed reading tasks. By the end of 7th grade and throughout 8th grade, however, she was an avid reader and often chose reading over other activities in class. However, based on her comprehension test scores and conversations that we had, I knew Tonya did not really understand what she was reading. On comprehension tests, she typically scored at the 2nd or 3rd grade equivalent, and from 3rd to 8th grade she had never passed the state-mandated ISTEP test. When Tonya and I discussed books she named the characters accurately, but when she told me about what she had read, her summaries often had little to do with what was actually happening in the text. Even when I knew for certain that Tonya had read the piece, her summaries did not fit the text. It was baffling because I could not determine what was happening when she read. In 6th grade Tonya had been tested for special education but did not qualify for services. Teaching Tonya to become an avid reader was a positive step, but I knew she needed more than I could give her during a regular English class if she was going to learn to comprehend. This made her a prime candidate for the Buddy Reading Programme.

On an early questionnaire, Tonya reported that she liked reading but that she did not think she was good at it and that reading was hard. Tonya reported that reading was important to her parents and that she had many books at home. Unlike many students who participated in the programme, she remembered being read to at a very young age.

She also reported that she knew where to find books. Although Tonya reported that she preferred reading nonfiction to fiction, I never saw her choose a nonfiction book, and in September she listed her favourite book as I Know What You Did Last Summer and her favourite author as Lois Duncan. According to Tonya, reading is hard when "*it is a hard book and when there is lots of big words*". Reading is easy when "*there is a easy book and easy words*". This suggests that Tonya struggled with decoding (Stanovich, 1986).

Tonya participated in the Buddy Reading Programme during her 8th grade year. She was enthusiastic about the programme from the first time I mentioned it and maintained her enthusiasm throughout the school year. As the oldest child in her family, Tonya was accustomed to working with younger children. When Tonya began working with her first grade buddy, it was obvious that they enjoyed each other's company. Tonya struggled with the record sheet and I reviewed it with her several times before she was comfortable using it. But by January she was recording on it accurately, and although her record sheets were never as detailed as I would have liked, they did improve during the year. Tonya regularly read aloud to her buddy, listened to her buddy read, worked with her on words using foam or magnetic letters, and did some writing activities. Tonya was willing to take the suggestions I gave her each week and try them. Tonya seemed to focus most on spelling and decoding with her buddy, C. The girls worked together very well and developed a strong relationship. Tonya was never absent during the buddy programme, and I am sure this helped build the relationship.

Tonya's mentor, Mrs. D, was one of the strongest mentors I had during the year, and because I was familiar with Tonya's reading issues, I intentionally paired her with Mrs. D. During their first meeting in October, Tonya was reading the book My Mother

the Cheerleader which was beyond Tonya's reading level. Mrs. D spent a great deal of time working on the vocabulary of the book with her. Tonya lacked the background knowledge to really understand this text and did not understand terms like "alma mater", "below the surface", "ninth ward", etc. Pearson *et al* (2007) found that a lack of background knowledge led to a difficulty in understanding vocabulary presented in texts. Because Tonya was struggling with the terms, Mrs. D worked on building this background knowledge, as Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1988) suggest. By the next week, Tonya had abandoned this book for one that was closer to her reading level. However, in other books that Tonya selected, there were still many words that she did not understand. As suggested by Pressley *et al* (1996), the lack of background knowledge was very detrimental to her comprehension.

During their second meeting, Mrs. D noticed that when Tonya wrote, she did not use any punctuation and that when she read she did not read the punctuation. Although I had noticed the lack of punctuation in the writing she did for class, I had not noticed it in her reading. Ignoring punctuation may have led to some of Tonya's reading comprehension issues, especially when reading dialogue. Mrs. D began focusing on helping Tonya slow down and notice the punctuation as she was reading. Hudson *et al* (2005) suggest that training students to attend to punctuation will improve fluency and then comprehension. Mrs. D also began stopping Tonya when she read something incorrectly and asking "*did that make sense?"*. Because many struggling readers believe that reading fast equals reading well, they often speed through a passage and make a guess at unknown words. They tend to continue reading whether their word substitutions made sense or not. Tonya began to add punctuation to her writing after about two weeks

of both Mrs. D and I constantly reminding her. In December and January, Mrs. D focused on teaching Tonya to work out what word was actually in the text, rather than making guesses. Sounding out the words was one strategy Mrs. D taught. I noticed that around this time Tonya started teaching C to sound out words as they were reading together. From her work with Mrs. D she was learning how to teach C. This reciprocal teaching and learning increased Tonya's reading progress (Palincsar and Brown, 1984).

Another reading issue that came out during mentor reading was that Tonya lacked inferential thinking as she read. She did not pick up on foreshadowing and was unable to make strong predictions about the text. In their studies, Garnham and Oakhill (1996) and Kintsch (1998) found that making appropriate inferences was essential to comprehension. Because Tonya did not infer, it was a skill that she needed to be taught. To work on inferring, I suggested Mrs. D use books that had a predictable pattern, such as The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle and Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst, which was a strategy found effective by Allen (2000). Using these books exposed Tonya to more titles she could read with C and gave Mrs. D the opportunity to work with Tonya on developing inference skills as Tonya began to recognize the patterns.

In late January Tonya found a book that she especially liked and she decided to reread it and then find another book by the same author, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. This is an important step toward becoming a life-long real reader. When readers are able to find books and authors that they enjoy they are more likely to keep reading (Ivey and Broaddus, 2001). Early in the year Tonya said she had trouble finding books that she enjoyed. Choosing another book by the same author was a step toward finding books

independently and showed progress. In mid-February Tonya joined the Twilight craze. Although she was only half way through the book by mid-March, she was still ploughing through. Her mother promised to buy her the movie when she finished the book, and because Twilight was so popular at this time, she had no trouble finding friends to discuss it with her, often joining the group of girls discussing books outside the door of my classroom. On her early questionnaire, Tonya said that she never discussed books with her friends; obviously that changed during the year. Although the book was difficult for her she was motivated to read it. Students can often read texts that are above their reading level if they have motivation to do so (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Tonya illustrates this clearly.

By mid- April Tonya was reading the second book in the Twilight series. Her reading of dialogue had improved, at least partially as a result of instruction on how to read books to the elementary buddies. However she was still substituting many words. I asked Mrs. D to write down the words Tonya missed as she read aloud (see Table 9). In doing this, she realized that Tonya typically read the beginning sounds and often the ending sounds correctly. She struggled most with the middle sounds of the words. So we began isolating the middle section, or morpheme, of the word for Tonya to sound out. Nagy *et al* (2006) found

Table 9: Tonya's Miscues in mid-April

Word Read	Text
involve	evolve
case	ease
viral	vial
expression	experience
contracted	concrete
rush	ruse
completed	contemplated
house	home
reminded	remained
partners	patrons
possibly	impossibly
exit	exist
futures	features
complaited	complicated
only	really
him	me
crusher	cruiser
dismal	dismissed
inducer	intruder

training students to use morphemes was especially helpful for older struggling readers.

When students are self-selecting books I often make suggestions, but leave the final decision up to them. My attempts throughout the year to move Tonya toward lower level books that she would have been able to read more easily had been fruitless. During their last session together in early May, Mrs. D asked Tonya to read an excerpt from Charlotte's Web by E.B. White, a book closer to Tonya's independent reading level. She read the excerpt with no errors and was able to accurately retell what she had read. This suggests that some of Tonya's reading difficulties may have been due to the level of books she was selecting. Yet as she discussed Twilight with her friends, she was able to accurately discuss what she had read. So the level of the texts Tonya selected early in the year was not the only problem she faced, as I had first theorized. Tonya's reading of punctuation and dialogue improved during the year as a result of the one to one mentoring and working with her elementary buddy. Her ability to select books she was interested in also improved during the year, as did her ability to decode words. When she worked with her mentor, she learned new strategies, such as chunking big words. Tonya transferred these strategies to working with her elementary buddy. She explained that she used her fingers to split words into morphemes for her buddy. She went on to say:

> *[Buddy Reading] has helped me by reading with little kids and teaching them how to read. And how it has helped me by learning all these big words too. Like aquarium. Like C had troubles on [it] and I have troubles on it like way back when. But when she's seen that word again then she can probably remember it.*

When asked if she felt like her reading had improved during the year, Tonya responded:

> *Yes it has. Because the more that I read in class and in school that we have reading time then my level has gotten higher.*

A Miscue Analysis showed further progress in Tonya's reading skills. Early in the year when the first Miscue Analysis was conducted, Tonya made 12 miscues on a 4th grade level passage of 289 words. She made only 2 corrections. Of her errors, half led to acceptable semantics (meaning) and half were unacceptable. Eight of the errors created an unacceptable syntax. This demonstrates (as her spoken words in Table 9 illustrate) that correct syntax was largely ignored. It also suggests that Tonya was not reading for meaning early in the year as half of her miscues affected the meaning of the text. In May, another Miscue Analysis was conducted. This time, Tonya was presented with a 7th grade level text. She made 12 miscues in a 339 word passage. She self-corrected 6 of the miscues. Of the remaining 6 errors, only 2 led to an unacceptable syntax and 3 led to an unacceptable meaning. This demonstrates an improvement in reading level, accuracy (96 percent on a 7th grade level text compared to 95 percent on a 4th grade level text earlier in the year), and attention to meaning and sentence structure.

However, according to the STAR Reading assessment, Tonya tested at a 3rd grade reading level throughout the school year. These test scores would suggest that her reading skills had not improved. An interesting note, however, is that Tonya was retained in 8th grade the year following the Buddy Reading Programme. In the autumn of her second year of 8th grade, Tonya tested at a 5th grade level on the STAR Reading test. Not only does this show an improvement, but it is also the first time in three years that Tonya's reading level did not drop during the summer, suggesting that she read over the summer (Kim, 2004), and therefore did not lose reading growth. At the end of Tonya's second year of 8th grade, her teachers reported that she was completing her assignments more regularly and had passed all of her classes for the first time in at least four years.

Discussion

These three students illustrate the varied nature of the reading issues that struggling adolescent readers face (Beer, 2003; Phelps, 2005) and are representative of the fifteen participants. Each of the students in the programme faced individual challenges and successes during the year, which are more fully described in their individual vignettes in Appendix G. Through the Buddy Reading Programme, Kyzee, Shawn, and Tonya, along with Stephanie, Kinsey, Corey, Jasmine, Kelsey, Savannah, and to some extent Chanteria learned how to find books that they liked, a major step in becoming a real reader. Although the programme was successful to varying degrees for these students, Kynzee, Shawn, and Tonya increased their reading grade equivalent during the programme and, to varying degrees, attended more to the meaning of the text. Attention to meaning making was evident among many of the students. Because the purpose of reading is to make meaning (Tatum, 2005; Palincsar, 2009), this was an important step in these students' reading development. Tonya, Takeelah, Kelsey, and Stephanie did not attend to punctuation early in the year, which negatively affected their comprehension. During the year each began to read punctuation correctly which enhanced their comprehension. Seven students, including Tonya, improved their decoding skills and fluency during the year, which likely also improved their comprehension. Of the ten students whose autumn 2009 reading scores were available, Kynzee, Shawn, and Tonya were among the five whose reading scores did not drop over the summer. For these three, it was the first time their reading level had not dropped over the summer due to a lack of reading (Kim, 2004). Although there is no data available to show whether these three students actually did read over the summer, the absence of the

Summer Reading Slump in their autumn scores is promising. Additionally, Shawn, along with Jasmine, Kelsey, Tabby, Takeelah, and to some extent Corey, all mentioned that they enjoyed reading more as a result of the Buddy Reading programme. These vignettes illustrate and suggest that the Buddy Reading Programme may have helped these three struggling readers, and many other participants in the programme, improve their reading skills and begin to develop the skills of 'real readers'.

Of the three students illustrated here, Tonya overcame the most reading difficulties. The affective issues of reading were not as much of an issue for Tonya as they were for Kynzee and Shawn at the beginning of the programme. In general, she liked reading if she could find a book she liked. However, she faced problems in decoding, inferring, and comprehending. Through the reciprocal work of the Buddy Reading Programme (Palincsar and Brown, 1984) and the one to one interactions with her mentor, Tonya made progress in each of these areas, transferred them to her personal and in-class reading, and left the programme well on her way to becoming a 'real reader'. The reciprocal nature of the programme was also beneficial for Corey, Chanteria, Takeelah, Madalyn, Kinsey, Stephanie and Tierney who learned from teaching someone else. Although the number of times they met with a mentor varied, like Tonya, strong mentors seemed to aid Takeelah, Corey, Tabby, Madalyn, Kelsey, Stephanie and Savannah in their reading; while weaker mentor relationships were especially evident for Jasmine, Kynzee, and Tierney. While Chanteria's mentor was strong and well-equipped to aid her, Chanteria's own attitude caused the relationship to be less beneficial than it could have been. Tabby's attitude toward her mentor and school in general, especially later in the year, affected her progress, yet she became a voracious reader. Just as Tonya

transferred her learning to reading outside the programme, Takeelah, Jasmine, Corey, Kelsey, Tabby, Stephanie, and Kinsey all mentioned using specific strategies learned in the programme to outside reading.

The three vignettes here illustrate the relationship between motivation, attitude, and improvement in reading. Early in the year much of Shawn's reading struggles seemed to be of a more affective nature and were improved through the process of more reading (Stanovich, 1986). Kynzee did not overcome the affective issues of reading to as great of an extent. Although she did not say she disliked reading at the end of the programme, her actions typically did not demonstrate an enjoyment of reading. Of these three students, Kynzee made the least progress during the year. Chanterria and Tierney also made less progress than other students in the programme. Trent made little progress, but this was likely due to other cognitive issues unrelated to the programme. It is likely that if Kynzee had had a stronger mentor and had been better matched with her buddy, the programme would have been more beneficial for her. It is also likely that her own attitude towards reading impacted her progress as a reader.

Kynzee, Shawn, and Tonya help illustrate how working with a younger student and with an adult mentor can affect older students' attitudes and motivation for reading. Like Kynzee, for both Shawn and Tonya, as well as for eight other students in the programme, reading became a social activity (NCTE, 2007). For Kynzee, however, the lack of strong relationships, both with her buddy and with her adult mentor, was detrimental to her reading, but for Shawn and Tonya the presence of these relationships was beneficial. As a result of working with her buddy and mentor, Tonya became an avid discusser of books. Although Kynzee said she enjoyed working with the younger

students, this did not seem to be a consistent feeling for her and may have led to a more negative attitude toward reading than the other two students felt.

The Buddy Reading Programme allowed these three students more time to practise reading texts in order to develop fluency. Tonya developed fluency both by working with her buddy and with Mrs. D, while Shawn developed fluency simply through increased reading. For him, more opportunities to read may have made the biggest difference. Kynzee practised reading the least of these three, and although her STAR Reading scores did improve, Kynzee may have benefitted from even more rehearsal of texts.

These three vignettes help to illustrate that the Buddy Reading Programme included a variety of elements that are essential to the development of 'real readers'. The programme met the variety of needs that the students faced in their personal and collective struggles with reading. Although the programme was successful with each to a varying degree, each student did make some progress during the year that he or she participated in the programme. These vignettes also help to illustrate some problems with relying only on quantitative measures and test scores to evaluate student progress. Although they cannot be measured on tests, many of the improvements in reading that occurred during the year helped the students enter the reading club (Smith 1992) and become 'real readers.'

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Contribution to New Knowledge

My research brought to light three main contributions to new knowledge: first, the social nature of the programme, the two tiers of partnerships, and the rehearsal opportunities provided for students led to increased dialogue about texts; second, a comprehensive balanced approach to literacy interventions simulates for struggling readers the 'real reading' process that more proficient readers engage in with automaticity; and third, the students in the programme were immersed in a literacy-rich environment, which led to natural interactions with texts.

The social nature of the Buddy Reading Programme was one of the strongest elements of the programme and led to results that I had not anticipated. Barton and Hamilton (2000, p. 9) suggest that "literacy is best understood as a set of social practices" and that "these are observable events which are mediated by written texts". There certainly were many observable social events based on books throughout the programme. The NCTE (2007) documented the social nature of adolescent literacy, and as Fisher (2008) suggested, the social nature of the programme led the students to read, talk, and think about texts with younger students, older mentors, and with peers for the purpose of comprehending the texts. Barton and Hamilton (2000) found that literacy is not the same in all contexts. While reading and literacy were negative experiences for many of the students at the beginning of the programme, the social aspects, in the context of the Buddy Reading Programme, led to positive literacy experiences. The partnerships between the middle school students and their buddies allowed students opportunity for rehearsal and provided opportunities for reciprocal teaching, while the adult mentoring

relationships included individualized one to one instruction (Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Stanovich, 1986; Rasinski, 2000; Brooks, 2002; Slavin *et al*, 2009) These partnerships led to an improvement in the reading skills of the participants because, as Barton and Hamilton (2000, p. 13) suggest, the students took on different roles and created "something more than their individual practices". The Buddy Reading Programme demonstrated that a well-designed reciprocal teaching programme can help to improve the attitudes and motivation of struggling adolescents towards reading. My research also demonstrated the value of a two-tiered Buddy Reading Programme in developing the social aspects of reading that are especially important to adolescent literacy that can lead to life-long literacy, because the students involved in the programme continued to discuss books outside of the programme as they talked with peers. The talk generated through the rehearsal of texts as the students worked with their buddies and their mentors led to more talk with their peers, and therefore, increased comprehension and interaction with texts. Literacy became part of a "social relationship, rather than a property of individuals" (Barton and Hamilton, 2000, p. 13).

The second contribution of this study is to demonstrate that a comprehensive balanced approach to literacy interventions simulates for struggling readers the 'real reading' process that more proficient readers engage in with automaticity, and that a buddy reading programme can provide this type of instruction. The programme helped to demonstrate that the elements identified by the National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000), phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension can be effective elements of a literacy programme for adolescent readers, as well as for emergent readers, and that these elements are especially important for older struggling readers. It is possible to instruct

struggling adolescent readers in all of these elements through a reciprocal teaching model (Palincsar and Brown, 1984). The middle school students in the programme engaged in a variety of reading strategies including predicting, visualizing, synthesizing, and comprehending which proficient readers engage in without thinking (Allen, 1995, 2000; Brownell and Walther-Thomas, 2000; Zhang and Hoosain, 2001; Dean and Trent, 2002; Tatum, 2005; Thomas and Wexler, 2007).

The third contribution to new knowledge exhibited through this study is to demonstrate that the students in the programme were immersed in a literacy-rich environment, which led to natural interactions with texts. The programme included elements of a literacy-rich environment, including a strong classroom library, recorded books, the opportunity to read and discuss texts, and read alouds (Carbo, 1995; Trelease, 1995, 2006; Koskinen *et al*, 1999; Cole, 2003; Johnson, 2005; Fisher and Ivey, 2006). Stanovich (1986) suggested that students with an environment conducive to reading are likely to read more so providing this environment was essential to the programme. Based on my study, I firmly believe that the more positive experiences students have with literacy, the more engaged they will become in literacy activities. Providing an environment where positive literacy experiences could occur was one of the reasons the Buddy Reading Programme was effective for most of the students who participated in it. The environment provided an opportunity for them to feel engaged and successful with literacy activities and gave them perhaps one of their first forays into the reading club (Smith, 1992). The students in the programme learned the skills and behaviours of real readers: finding books they enjoy, discussing books with others, reading for a variety of

reasons, and using a variety of reading strategies, as necessary, to develop fluency and make meaning.

Classroom instruction that includes the elements of a comprehensive balanced literacy programme is likely to be effective in creating real readers. However, as Biancarosa and Snow (2006) found, if these elements are inconsistent or if only a few of the elements are present, the instruction will not be as effective. At the secondary level, these necessary elements are less likely to be consistently present in classrooms. Therefore, a well-designed intervention programme can help to fill the gap, as illustrated in this study.

This research expanded upon previous studies of buddy programmes in that rather than looking only for a change in attitudes (Friedland and Truesdell, 2006), in fluency (Wright and Cleary, 2006), or in phonics (Mathes et al, 1998), or in another single aspect, it looked at the many complex issues involved in creating real readers, and addressed all five reading pillars identified by the National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000). The goal of this research was to determine whether a Buddy Reading Programme could serve to develop many of the aspects involved in developing proficient readers. The results suggest that a similarly designed Buddy Reading Programme may, in fact, be an effective way to develop the 'real reading' skills of struggling readers. My study demonstrated that within one school a well-designed Buddy Reading Programme helped to fill gaps in literacy instruction. It was effective for developing real readers who select their own reading materials, engage with texts, discuss texts with others, read for their own purposes, read with fluency, and make meaning. A similarly designed Buddy Reading Programme may be one effective intervention for struggling readers in other settings.

Ethical Considerations

I have already discussed the ethical dilemmas I considered while planning the study. This pre-planning aided me as I carried out the study. Horowitz (2000) suggests that in research with adolescents especially, attention to their feelings is essential. In the process of the study, one student wanted to quit the programme. I met with the student individually to discuss what she was feeling. She explained that she was falling behind in her classes. I helped this student go to her teachers for missing assignments, worked with her to find time to complete them, and offered additional assistance. But I also allowed her to no longer participate in the programme. Although she was no longer part of the programme, I did want to see her be successful in her classes and tried to help provide her with the tools she needed to be more successful. A similar dilemma I faced was when one of the mentors wanted to quit mentoring her student. The two had not bonded well and neither seemed to benefit from the relationship. Although I believe in the power of mentoring, in this case, the most ethical thing to do seemed to be to permit the mentor to discontinue participation with as much dignity as possible and search for a replacement mentor for the student. In both cases, although I was disappointed that the individuals had chosen to no longer participate in the programme, and this left the programme two people short, it seemed to be the best decision.

Another ethical issue I faced was a result of being an insider researcher (McNiff, 1993). Because I was working so closely with some of the students in the school, I came to know them as individuals and as readers much better than I knew the other students. My role as a researcher and as a teacher sometimes overlapped and I had to best determine how to resolve this. This dual role especially came in to play as I was working

with Trent. Trent was struggling in all of his classes and seemed to do worse and worse as the year progressed. As a team of teachers, we determined that Trent should be tested for special education eligibility. The initial test showed a learning disability in mathematics. I had seen, however, major problems in Trent's reading skills. Because of my research I had additional data on Trent that I would not have collected on most students in my English classes. I faced the dilemma of maintaining confidentiality versus helping the student receive the extra help that he needed. I determined that sharing one of Trent's Miscue Analysis reports with the special education tester was a responsibility I had and would not break confidentiality. As a result of the information I shared, Trent was re-evaluated using a different battery of tests. The results of these tests suggested that Trent had an IQ of 59. As a result, for the remainder of the year, Trent received special education services and continued to receive services when he went to the high school the following year. In this instance, helping Trent receive the help he needed that I was unable to provide in my own classroom was the only ethically defensible response.

A final ethical dilemma was that the Buddy Reading Programme was limited to only a few students. Students who were not in the programme and did not receive consistent comprehensive balanced instruction within their classrooms were at a disadvantage. Although the programme was not made available to everyone, it was made available to the most at risk students who were not already receiving some type of service. The Buddy Reading Programme was designed to be one type of intervention. By definition, an intervention is not offered to everyone, as not all students need it. By working with other English teachers the programme reached some of the neediest students in the school.

Reflections

Test Scores

As I collected and analyzed data, I found that the STAR Reading test scores were not the strongest source of data. Although Sewell *et al* (2007) found the STAR Reading test to provide results similar to other reading tests, the results did not always provide information consistent with the other data collected, and did not provide a full picture of the students' reading abilities of deficiencies. The observations, interviews, questionnaires, student records, mentor journals, and photos provided a more complete picture. So I had to determine whether to include the test score data or leave it out. I chose to not include the state ISTEP assessment data because it did not provide sufficient evidence, giving only a score of pass or fail for each student, which was very limited information. I did choose to include the STAR Reading data, however, for several reasons. First, because American education is currently strongly influenced by test data, to include no standardized test data would be irresponsible and would not include the quantitative data necessary for the research to be taken seriously by many audiences. The inclusion of these data also helped to illustrate the folly of evaluating schools, students, and teachers on the basis of test scores only. The test scores gave only one piece of the picture of a whole student. In order to really understand students' reading problems and to work to correct the problems, a variety of evaluations should be used to inform teachers and other decision-makers.

A second reason to include the STAR Reading data was because the test was administered several times a year for several years, it helped give a picture of the students' reading over time. The test data illustrated that during the past three years the

students' reading scores had been low, and that their reading struggles had not begun recently. The test scores also illustrated that the students' scores were inconsistent over time. A proficient reader's test scores would be expected to increase over time. For a struggling reader, however, progress is not linear and often goes down, rather than up, within one school year. In addition, the students in the programme did not consistently make a full year's progress in one school year, as would be expected. Finally, many of the students in the programme experienced the Summer Reading Slump (Kim, 2004) in which their scores dropped over the summer months when they were not in school. The STAR Reading test was the only data I collected on students' progress outside the eight months the programme was conducted, and because the programme was conducted fully within one school year it was the only data that illustrated this phonemna.

More Time for Literacy

Throughout the first year of the Buddy Reading Programme I planned ways that I would change and expand it during the second year. The most major change I had in mind was to provide the students in the programme with even more time to be involved in literacy activities. I wanted to provide more opportunities to develop reading because students who are involved in more literacy activities typically are more proficient (Biancarosa and Snow, 2006). The plan I concocted to provide this time was to have the students in the programme in my class for their study hall period. During this period, I would involve the students in fun, literacy activities that often are not done on a daily basis. The first activity would have been a daily read aloud (Trelease, 1995, 2006). I did read aloud a children's book at the beginning of each buddy session, but when meeting with only the older students I would have read a portion of an adolescent level book each

day as well. This would model not only fluent reading but also how to stick with a longer text and remember what happened after a period of time not reading the book. Read alouds are extremely important to literacy development, yet they become less and less common as students become older (Trelease, 1995, 2006).

Another activity I wanted to include was Reader's Theater. In a Reader's Theater, usually five students practise and perform a short script, usually an adaptation of a book, without memorizing the text or using props, and the reading becomes an oral interpretation of the text. As each student practises his or her part of the text with other students they are improving their fluency through repeated readings (Rasinski, 2003). After a few days of practise, the students perform the script for their classmates. Reader's Theatres are fun and give students more confidence in their reading as they perform in front of others. Because it takes a few days to prepare a Reader's Theater script, they are rarely done in secondary classrooms where there is a great deal of content. The Buddy Reading class would have included more strategy lessons (Brownell and Walther-Thomas, 2000) throughout the year – both strategies the students could teach their buddies and strategies they could use on their own. Reading and comprehending a textbook would have been a lesson included, because textbook reading is a type of reading with which secondary students struggle. I would have included lessons on selecting books, rather than leaving this mainly up to the mentors. Students would have had more opportunities in class to read with a partner and share books with each other. Student book talks would have become a regular part of the class. The year that I conducted the Buddy Reading Programme I began collecting audio books of adolescent books, but never had the opportunity to use them. Because audio books have been found

effective (Beers, 1998), if I had seen the students daily, I would have made more use of the audio books and would have encouraged the students to create their own audio books for each other, and not just for the first graders. I would have included regular self-selected reading time in the class and students would have participated in book clubs with their classmates.

If I had the students for a daily class, I would have exposed them to more genres of literature, including poetry, nonfiction, historical fiction, informational texts, and folklore. I would have added a writing component to the class and given students the opportunity to write for their own purposes. I would have invited people from the community into the classroom to share books with the students, and have allowed students to invite their family into the classroom to share their own reading and writing. The class would have been based on a reading and writing workshop, but with even more freedom to complete literacy activities not included in regular daily instruction. Social interactions would have been a daily part of the classroom literacy activities (NCTE, 2007).

This was the dream I had for extending the Buddy Reading Programme, and perhaps, some day it will be fulfilled.

My Role as an Insider Researcher

Because I am a teacher in the school in which I conducted my research, I am an insider researcher (McNiff, 1993). This allowed me greater access to the students, school records, and school personnel than if I had been an outsider researcher. McNiff (1993) suggests that educational inquiry is a form of reflexive practice. For me, this was certainly the case. By reflecting on my own practice and on the teaching practices I

observed in my school, I determined that there was a need for more comprehensive balanced literacy instruction throughout the school.

McNiff (1993, p. 30) describes the process of "recursively improving practice", similar to the action research process, as a cycle of identifying a problem, imagining a solution, evaluating the solution, and modifying practice. This is much the process I went though. The problem I saw was that as many as fifty percent of the students in the school were reading below grade level. Although the school corporation had provided many professional development opportunities for teachers to learn more about effective literacy instruction in all content areas, the implementation of these practices was inconsistent. As discussed earlier, implementing one or two teaching strategies is not enough to improve literacy instruction; a more comprehensive approach must be taken (Biancarosa and Snow, 2006). I began planning the Buddy Reading Programme as a potential solution, or at least as an additional support in the form of an intervention, for struggling readers who were receiving no special education services. Throughout this research study, I evaluated the solution and reflected on my own practices.

It is widely agreed that teachers who reflect on their own practices are likely to modify and improve their practices, and that this is more effective than changes in curriculum (Elliott, 1991; McNiff, 1993; Thomas, 2007). It is also widely understood that effective teachers, rather than programmes, improve students' literacy (Horowitz, 2000; Perkins and Cooter, 2005; Fisher and Ivey, 2006). The Buddy Reading Programme is not an easily packaged programme, but rather a carefully planned intervention. It was based on the principles of effective literacy instruction and provided additional opportunities for literacy for the students involved in it. The programme was based on

my own reflexive practices rather than being developed as a commercialized 'teacher-proof' programme or as a programme that would only serve to improve low level comprehension skills and raise test scores. Because I was familiar with the school culture and the students in the building, being an insider researcher was an asset in many ways.

Some of the strengths and opportunities of being an insider researcher, in my case, were that I had established relationships and rapport with the other English teachers in the building. As I talked to them about their students who were in the programme I spoke to them as a colleague, rather than a researcher. Although they were aware that I was doing research, the research was viewed as something separate from school. They regarded our conversations as collegial and were willing to openly share information with me. I did not express to other teachers in the building my concern that literacy instruction was not as effective in their classroom as it might have been. Rather, we worked together to find solutions to the wider reading problem in the school (Robson, 2002). Some insider researchers find that their relationships are diminished as a result of their role as a researcher, but this did not seem to be an issue for me.

Another strength of conducting research within my school, as Homan (2002) suggested, was my knowledge of the organization and my ability to access the resources that were necessary. For example, I worked closely with the school media specialist to access student test scores and to access multiple copies of books so that the mentors and the middle school students could read the same books. I was aware of school policies involving informed consent, photographing students, and bringing in volunteers to work with students. I knew many parents of students in the building and had resources for finding adult mentors. I was familiar with the actual building I was working in and knew

where students could meet with their mentors without being disrupted. I was also aware of the extra services that were available for students, which was especially important when I realized that Trent's difficulties were beyond those with which I was personally trained to work. I was well aware of the steps for finding extra help for him and was prepared to deal with the politics of that situation. An outsider would not have had these advantages.

A final strength of being an insider researcher, for me, was that the study was manageable. If I had tried to do a similar study in another school it would have been much more difficult. Not only would I have had less knowledge of the context, I would have likely had less space. Rasinski and Padak's (2004) idea of developing a comprehensive balanced literacy programme was manageable because I already had many of the structures in place. The buddy sessions took place in my classroom where I already had a classroom library and a book check out system in place. Adding the books for the Buddy Reading Programme was simply a matter of finding another bookshelf to put in my room, purchasing, and organizing the books. If I had conducted this research in another setting it would have taken a great deal more to set it up.

Being an insider researcher also led to some weaknesses in the study. One of the most prominent weaknesses was the issue of power. Elliott (1991) suggests that there is an unequal power relationship between outsider and insider researchers. Because I was a teacher in the building where I was conducting the research I had a certain amount of power over the students. Several of the students were in my English class or in my enrichment class. I tried to keep this power to a minimum by separating my teacher role from the researcher role, but students still regarded me as a teacher. And within my role

in the Buddy Reading Programme, I was still responsible for teacher roles, such as taking attendance, monitoring time, and providing instruction. Dunne *et al* (2005) suggest that power is inextricably linked to our exchanges with others. Despite my best efforts, this seemed to be the case for me as well.

In most of my interactions with students this teacher-role was not a problem. The students are accustomed to interacting with their teachers. However, in the case of Kynzee, it did seem to be somewhat of a weakness. This was most evidenced by the difference in Kynzee's responses on questionnaires and interviews and in her participation within the programme. When Kynzee wrote comments on surveys or gave oral answers in interviews, she was very positive about the Buddy Reading Programme, however her actions told a different story. Perhaps she was telling me what she thought I wanted to hear. She became less and less engaged in working with her first grade buddy as the year progressed, several times refusing to attend the sessions entirely. During the last few sessions, she allowed a friend to work with two buddies while she sat to the side unengaged. This does not necessarily mean that Kynzee did not benefit at all from the programme; the actions of adolescents are not so easily interpreted. Rather this suggests that because of my role as a teacher in the building Kynzee believed she needed to speak to me in a certain way, even if it did not reflect her true feelings.

Another weakness I faced in this study was that I continued my role as a full-time teacher in addition to my role as a researcher. Between the end of the buddy sessions and the beginning of my next class, I typically had less than ten minutes to record my observations and transition to teaching. As a result, my observation records were sometimes written later or were in the form of sketchy notes. I had less opportunity for

written reflection immediately following the sessions than I would have liked, and as a result, my descriptions were not always as thick as I would have liked (Geertz, 1973; Thomas, 2009).

A final weakness that insider researchers can face is a lack of objectivity. Because of the personal investment in the research, it is possible to lose a wider perspective. But as Altrichter *et al* (1993) explain, a wide view of the research situation is necessary. Collecting data from many sources was an asset, and as Yin (1984) suggests that using multiple sources of data, creating a database of evidence, and keeping a record of evidence can help establish validity and reliability. Triangulation of multiple sources of data can aid in trustworthiness (Eisner, 1993; Allor *et al,* 2006; Thomas, 2009). In my study, I used a variety of data sources, established multiple perspectives from different participants, and wrote thick descriptions. The triangulation of these sources aided me in drawing trustworthy conclusions.

Insider researchers may face threats that are less present in outsider research. A common threat is internal resistance from people within the organization. When I first began planning the programme there was a mixture of excitement and a belief that it would be too difficult to start and maintain the programme. However, most of my colleagues were supportive. A few teachers were resistant to allowing the students out of class for the programme, so I intentionally set up the schedule in a way that would take the students out of their class for no more than twenty to thirty minutes once every two weeks. This small amount of time made teachers less resistant to releasing the students. I also worked with the teachers to make sure the students were keeping up in their classes and made up any work that they missed. Occasionally, a student missed a portion of my

English class in order to make up a test in another class. But for the most part I was very fortunate in that the other teachers were willing to work with me.

Another type of resistance I faced initially was from my principal. Although he was supportive of the programme in theory, he could not envision a way to make the master schedule work to allow the additional time within the school day needed to facilitate the buddy sessions. To overcome this hurdle, I carefully examined the master schedule and student schedules and developed a plan that would allow the Buddy Reading Programme to fit within the school day. When I presented this schedule to my principal he became more supportive of the programme and allowed it to proceed.

The greatest threat to the Buddy Reading Programme came the following school year. After positive responses from students, parents, and teachers I planned to continue the Buddy Reading Programme, with a few modifications, into a second year and possibly indefinitely. I worked with the principal to develop a master schedule that would again allow for the Buddy Reading Programme to continue and still allow me to meet my obligations as a classroom teacher. However, over the summer a new principal, who immediately changed the master schedule, was hired. The changes to the schedule made it virtually impossible to continue the Buddy Reading Programme because the time he allotted for the programme was early in the day and before the first graders were in school, as the elementary schools have a later start time than the middle schools. I met with him, described the programme and the benefits of it, explained why the schedule had been developed as it had, and why the change in the schedule would not facilitate the continuance of the programme. Although he said he would like to see the programme

continue and said he was supportive of it, he had his own agenda and was unwilling to create room in the schedule that would make it feasible for the programme to continue.

This, unfortunately, brought an end to the Buddy Reading Programme at Woodview Middle School. Although it did not directly have an impact on my research study as the data had already been collected, it was a disappointment to the students who were planning to participate in the programme and was unlikely to have had positive effects on the reading abilities of the students who would have been involved. This particular threat could have been faced by either an insider or an outsider researcher and was beyond my direct control either as a teacher or as a researcher.

Future Research

After completing my research, I have recognized several areas for future research. First, my fifth research question about whether recorded books and technology can help motivate students was not fully answered through my research. Future research may examine whether making recorded books available to older students working within a Buddy Reading Programme is effective in motivating these older students to read more. The mentoring component of my Buddy Reading Programme seemed to be effective for inviting students into the reading club (Smith, 1992), however it was the most difficult element to put in place. Whether a similarly designed and implemented programme would be as effective without the mentoring component is an area for future research. My goal for the second year of the Buddy Reading Programme was to include the programme as one element in a literacy class for struggling students, beyond their regular English language arts class. If more time for literacy activities is beneficial to students,

examining the Buddy Reading Programme within this paradigm could lead to valuable research.

As with any effective programme, whether or not it can be replicated in another setting is an important question to consider. Replicating this programme elsewhere to determine its effectiveness could lead to valuable information for teachers and schools working with struggling readers. Finally, in the United States, much attention is being given to offering effective interventions for 'bubble' students (Ho, 2008) in order to raise their test scores. Determining whether the programme can be replicated and its value as an intervention is research that may be valuable to administrators and teachers.

The Role of Teacher Researchers

An interesting, and for me unexpected, result of this research was a realization of the role of teacher researchers in the process of school improvement. As McNiff (1993) and Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggest, I have long believed in the power of teacher reflection to improve personal instruction and have seen my own teaching improve as I have reflected on my practices. For me, reflection has led me to read research to improve my practice and to conduct informal research within my own classroom. Classroom research is a powerful tool for individual teachers but I had never given much thought to the power of research to improve the school as a whole. Yet through the Buddy Reading Programme, the reading skills of students throughout the school were improved. Elliott (1991) found that teachers were the people most able to make fundamental changes to education. The Buddy Reading Programme demonstrated that a comprehensive balanced approach to literacy instruction is the most effective way to develop real readers. The dissemination of this information, along with professional development and teaching

other teachers how to implement this type of instruction has powerful implications for school-wide reform. A grassroots approach of researchers and teacher researchers teaching teachers is, perhaps, the most effective way of improving instruction.

This type of instruction can be contrasted with the role of government in schools. Currently in the United States, government officials, who often are not educators, determine how schools must improve. This is done through testing, setting cut scores on tests, and determining whether or not schools have met AYP. Yet these test scores give only a partial picture. Test scores show how a student performed on one test on one particular day, but they do little to fully illustrate any strengths or deficiencies of a student or to inform teachers of how to better meet the needs of students. Just as test scores do little to improve practice, tests do little to motivate students or to develop real life-long readers (Harlen and Deakin Crick, 2002). Rather the tests, as Skidmore (2000) suggests, encourage poor instruction that only serves to prepare students for the test, and does little to prepare them for the 'real reading' tasks they will face throughout life.

As I write this, the United States government is in the process of promoting national standards. While it may seem a good idea for students in all schools to learn the same material, one must ask who is developing these standards and who is best qualified to determine what students should know: politicians or teachers? Would the standards be better developed by researchers, partnered with teachers, who understand students' development and progress over time? Another question that must be asked is whether it is necessary for all students to learn the same material? Do students in New York City have the same educational needs as those living in Juneau, Alaska; Lincoln, Nebraska; or Miami, Florida? Are national standards the best way to ensure effective classroom

instruction, and more specifically effective reading instruction? In England, the National Literacy Strategy required a 'one size fits all' approach to literacy instruction that was developmentally inappropriate for some children and served to limit teachers rather than empower them (Fisher, 2000; Rose, 2009). Earl et al (2000) suggests that the National Literacy Strategy was developed by drawing on research-based practices. But as Allington (2006) points out, simply saying that a particular method is 'researched based' does not mean much. Questions he suggests asking are: Who is doing the research and do they have an agenda? Has the research been tested in a real classroom with real students? (2006). The new national standards, developed by politicians in Washington, DC, are not guaranteed to improve education in the United States. The professional development of teachers and teacher reflection is likely to make a greater impact on classrooms (McNiff, 1993; Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995).

Where in this debate is the place of teacher education programmes? Rather than mandating more tests, perhaps public education would be better served by a closer look at teacher education programmes to determine which programmes were producing the most effective teachers and which elements of education programmes produce effective classroom teachers. However, preservice teacher education programmes, while important, are not sufficient. Students and society change during a teacher's career. In order to be current, a teacher cannot rely only on practices learned in undergraduate programmes before his or her career began. Rather continuing education and continuing professional development are essential to the continued effectiveness of teachers (Biancarosa and Snow, 2006). Through continued professional development and reflexive practice, teachers improve their practice (Fielding *et al*, 2005). As I reflect back

on this study, I have come to realise that teacher researchers and teachers partnering with researchers are better able to improve their own situations than are government interventions and policies. Bassey (1999) suggests that educational researchers should have the goal of informing both teachers and policy makers. The role of researchers in overall school improvement is significant because teachers' understanding of their own practice leads to educational change McNiff (1993). And as Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) add, teacher research should be an element of professional development.

Final Thoughts

I have already discussed the context of the school where I conducted this research in the shadow of No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) and the pressures of meeting Adequate Yearly Progress. Because of the additional pressure on teachers and students and the inordinate amount of standardized testing, the 2008-2009 school year was one of the most difficult years of teaching I have faced. However, creating and implementing the Buddy Reading Programme was an opportunity to change the direction of many students' literacy lives. As I conducted the programme and watched the literacy growth in the middle school students and in the buddies I was reminded of why I became a teacher – to effect change in the lives of my students. I was not among the ranks of teachers who despair over the lack of literacy skills in their students. Not once that year did I complain "these kids can't read!" Instead I had found a way to meet students where they were and help develop them to into real readers.

In her final interview, Madalyn articulated something that is a good reminder:

> *[The Buddy Reading Programme] like, it helped me interact with children in the right way… like be patient with them. They're not going to learn it right then and there. It takes time.*

Teaching children does take time. According to Horowitz (2000, p. 25), "a ten week program or a six month program isn't going to do it". So many programmes and interventions try to 'fix' students in a set period of time in order to raise test scores. These types of programmes typically lead to low level comprehension and a lack of thinking. The Buddy Reading Programme, on the other hand, was comprehensive. It included a wide range of strategies and methods for improving students' reading skills. The goal of the programme was not to simply raise test scores, but rather to create life-long readers who think about and discuss texts and who read for their own purposes; to create real readers. Toward this goal, the Buddy Reading Programme included the most effective elements of reading instruction.

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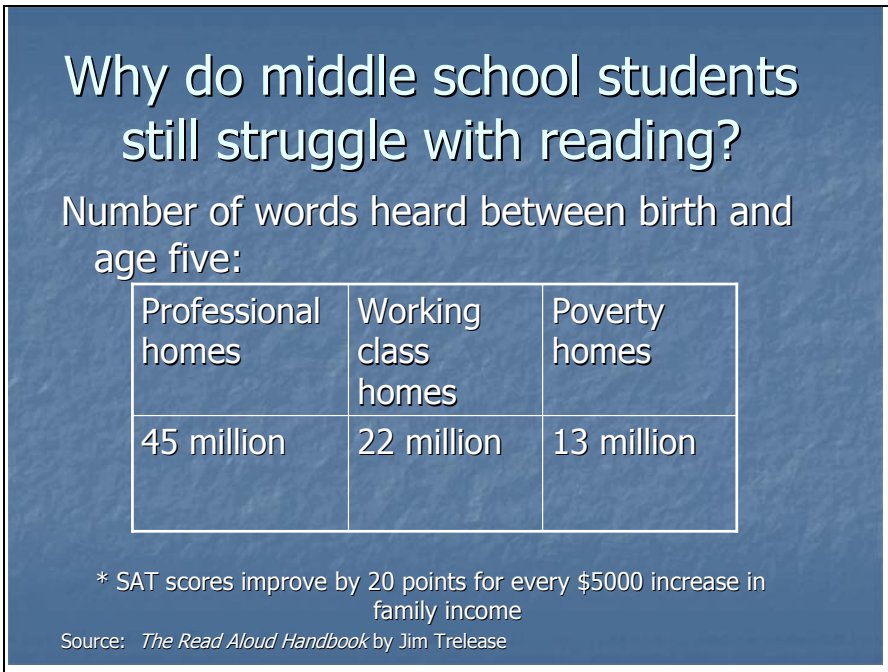
Appendix A: Training

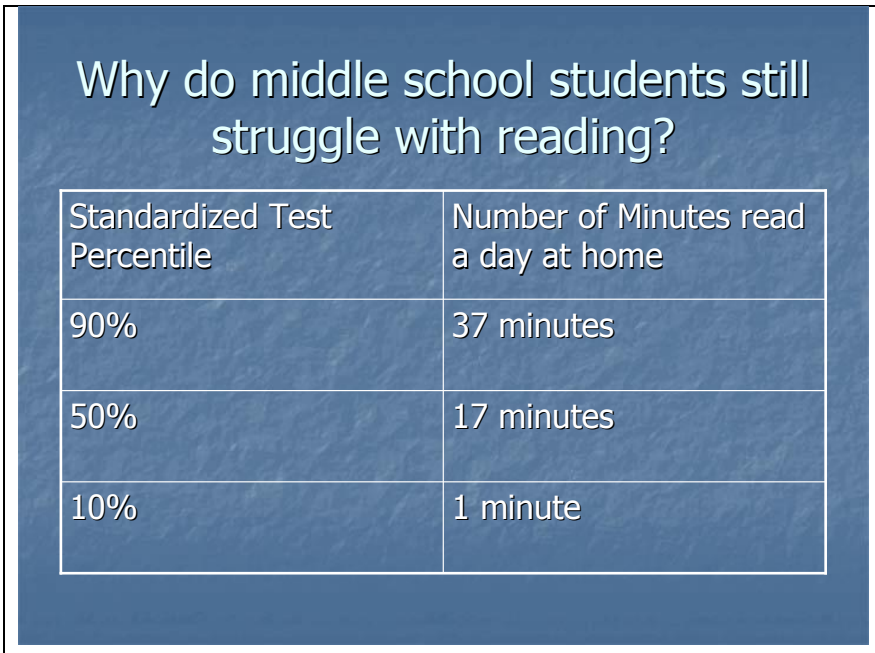
Training Adult Mentors

Before the Buddy Reading Programme began, I planned a training session for the adult mentors. While just having an adult mentor is a benefit for many students, I wanted the relationship to also have some academic benefits and I wanted the mentors to be well-equipped to help their students. In a 45 minute training session, I taught them why students have difficulty reading in middle school, demonstrated some of the types of problems students have, and taught them how good readers deal with difficult text. I also taught them several strategies for helping their students improve their reading.

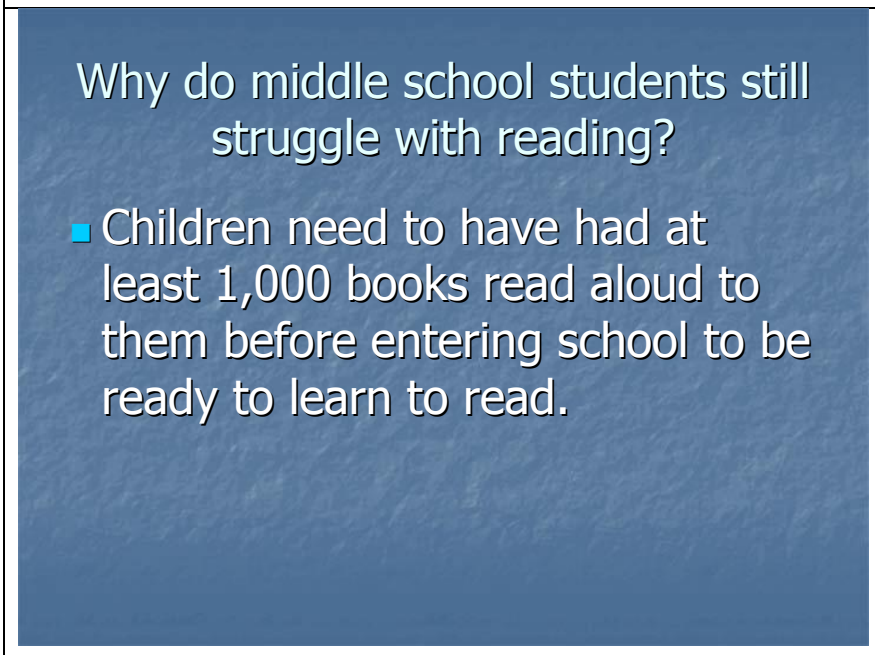
The training session was offered at three different times to accommodate the mentor's schedules, and each mentor was given a packet of information. The training session began with a read aloud of *Thank you Mr. Falkner* by Patricia Polacco (2001). Then I shared a Power Point that included statistics about struggling readers, put the mentors in the shoes of a struggling reader, and gave ideas for helping the struggling readers. The annotated Power Point is included below.



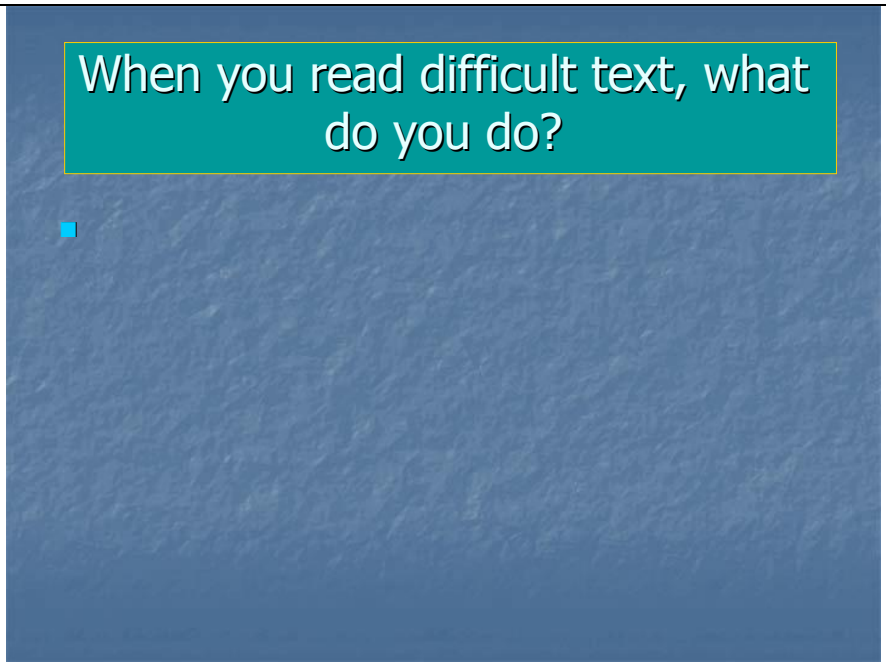
The information on this slide is based on a study in which tape recorders were placed in homes when newborn babies came home from the hospital. From birth until age five, the study recorded the number of words the child heard. One interesting finding was that in professional homes, the words were often part of read alouds, in complete sentences, and explained things to children. In the poverty homes, many of the words were sentence fragments and yelling at the child (Trelease 1995). The three classes were simply defined as professional or "white collar", working class or "blue collar", and poverty or "no collar". This simplified definition was easily understood by the mentors and served the purpose of illustrating why so many students start school behind their peers and never catch up.



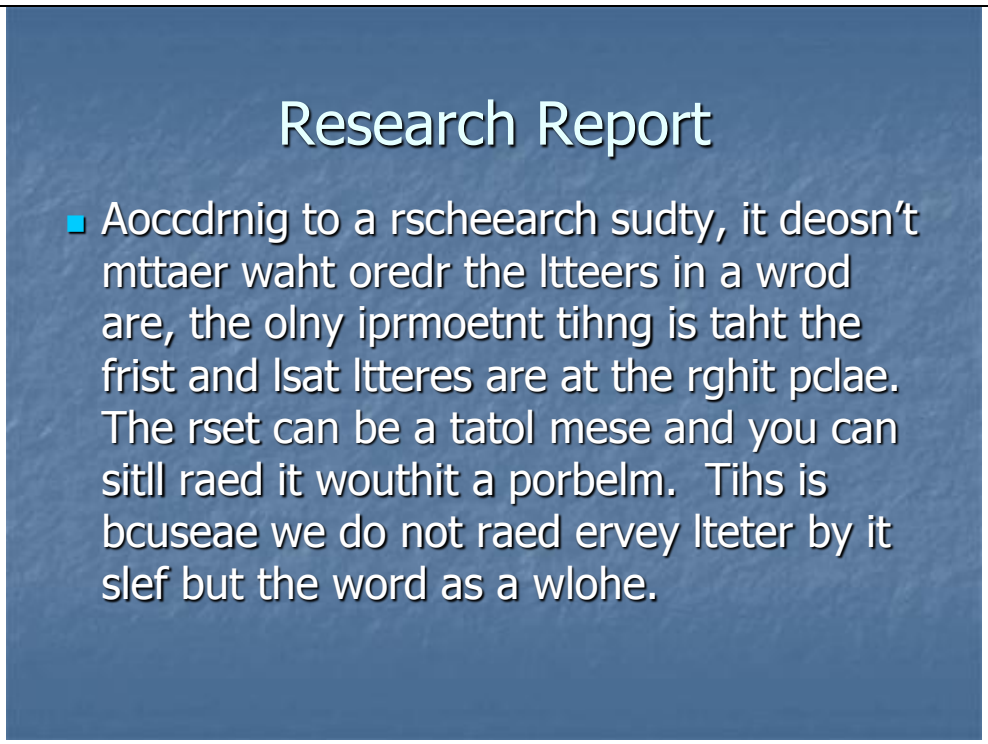
This information is also from *The Read-Aloud Handbook* (1995). My purpose is to illustrate the importance of students reading for pleasure. For a student to choose to read for pleasure, he or she must feel some success. Many of the middle school students in the programme have had little reading success.



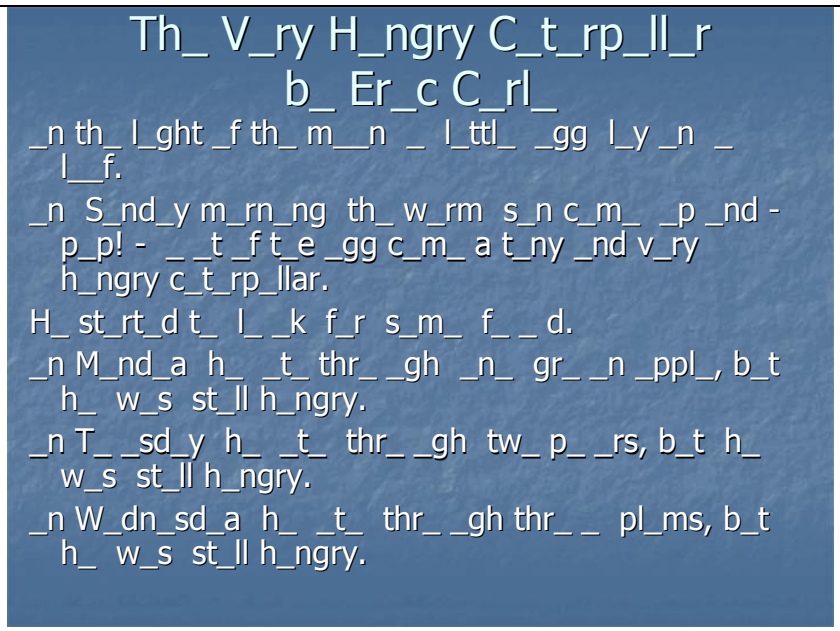
In New Zealand, a "ten book child" is a child who enters school having heard ten or fewer books read aloud (Allen 1995, p. 135). These children begin school behind their peers and lack the skills to understand even how a book works – from right to left and top to bottom. They must learn this before learning to read.



At this point, the mentors-in-training brainstormed things they do. Ideas they shared included: rereading, looking up words in the dictionary, and using context clues to work out unknown words. While these are all useful strategies, they are limited. Students who struggle with comprehension need more than just a dictionary definition of an unknown word. So from this point, I show the mentors different types of reading problems students face. Because many of the mentors have never struggled with reading themselves, they need to understand what struggling to read and comprehend feels like.



I first saw the text to the left in an e-mail forward while I was an undergraduate student. I later found it online so I could share as part of reading presentations (Larson 2005). While my goal was not to discuss whether or not this was really a research study or the veracity of it, my goal was to teach my mentors to slow down as they are reading. While they read this aloud fairly easily, they did have to slow down and think as they were reading it. I have used the following several slides in presentations for both undergraduate students and teachers, and now with adult volunteers, in order to help demonstrate reading struggles that some students face.



This is the beginning text from *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (1981). I have removed the vowels from it. As the mentors read it aloud, they only had to choose from five possible letters that could fill in the blanks. For example, the word "_n" could only be either "in" or "on" or "an". The book also includes a pattern. As they work out the text, it becomes easier because of the pattern. "Reinforcing predictable language patterns is an excellent way to help struggling readers begin to anticipate words in reading" (Allen 2000). Many texts for emergent readers include a pattern or rhyming words because these patterns support the reader.

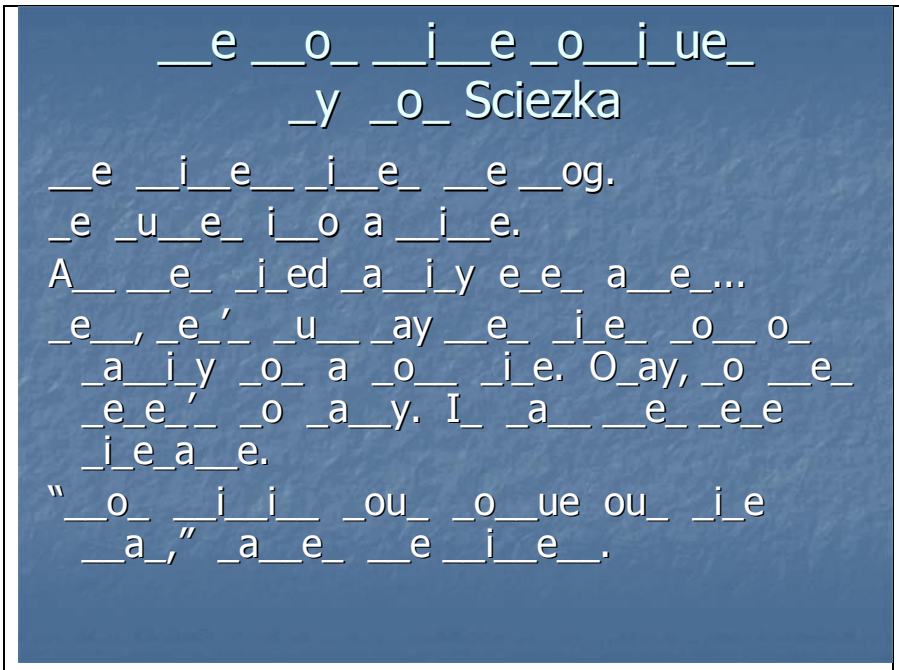
This text reads: "The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

In the light of the moon a little egg lay on a leaf. On Sunday morning the warm sun came up and – pop! – out of the egg came a tiny and very hungry caterpillar. He started to look for some food.

On Monday he ate through one green apple, but he was still hungry.

On Tuesday, he ate through two pears, but he was still hungry.

On Wednesday he ate through three plums, but he was still hungry" (1981).



This text is more difficult. Although it is based on a fairy tale, there is not a clear pattern to it. Most of the consonants have been removed, so there are 21 possible letters for each blank.

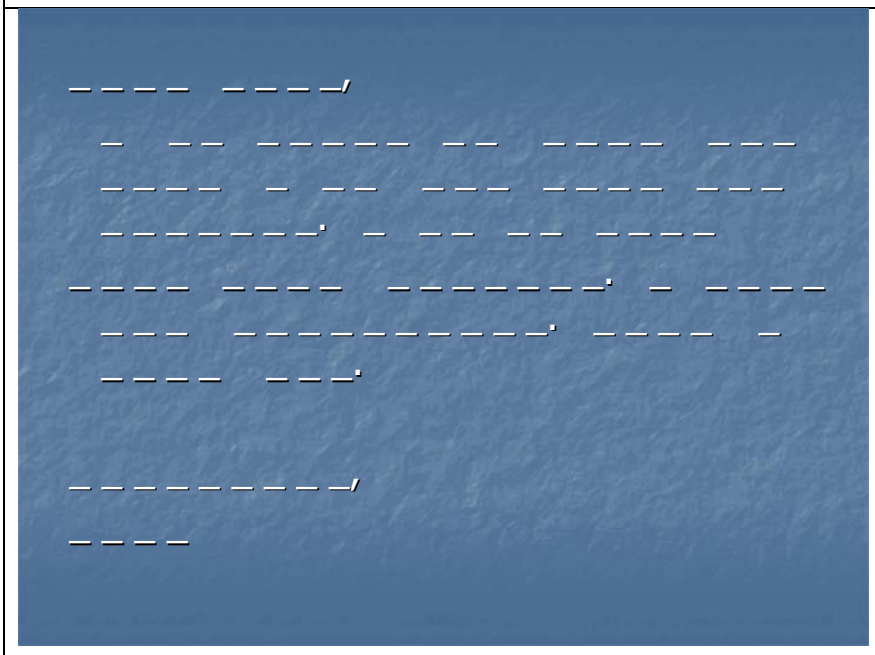
As the mentors were figuring out the words, they realized that by the time they had the end of the line figured out, they had forgotten the beginning. Many struggling readers who must decode words have this same problem: they use so much of their memory to decode that they are unable to remember the words they have worked out. To further illustrate what happens to struggling students, I offered helpful encouragement such as "You can do it!" and "I know you know this word" or "You have already read this word, don't your recognize it?" How often well-intentioned teachers offer comments like these that only serve to frustrate struggling readers rather than encourage them. This activity was intended not only to frustrate the mentors but also as a warning to be careful about the ways they "encourage" struggling readers whose reading self-esteem is already damaged by the time they reach middle school. Kyleen Beers (2003) explains, "these student who struggle with reading know they struggle with reading; they know that they lack the single most important tool for success in school – the ability to read and make sense of texts – and they know that in not having that ability, they are open to ridicule from peers and from teachers" (p. 6). As the mentors

work with the students, I want to make sure that we do not cause them to feel more ridicule, but rather to be sure that we are really helping them.

Inevitably, the mentors gave up before reading very far, and I read the text to them. While I did this simply because I am trying to make a point with the text, how struggling readers often either give up, or the person they are reading to becomes frustrated and gives up. "You have to be patient with kids," explains Janet Allen (1995), "and you can't rush them in reading" (p. 85). Many struggling readers have learned that if they wait long enough, someone will read the text to them.

The actual text is a "fractured fairy tale" called *The Frog Prince Continued* by Jon Scieszka (1991). It reads, "The princess kissed the frog. He turned into a prince. And they lived happily ever after… Well, let's just say they lived sort of happily for a long time. Okay, so they weren't so happy. In fact, they were miserable.

'Stop sticking your tongue out like that,' nagged the Princess".



This fourth text includes no letters, however, adult readers are always able to work it out. They begin with "Dear"

"How do you know?" I ask.

"Well, you can tell it's a letter".

They are right. Although they may not realize it, they are familiar with text structure. They know

What a letter looks like and they can tell from the structure, without any vowels or consonants, that this is a letter.

"Okay, what's next?" I ask.

"John."

I write in "Dear John". I think adults pick "John" because it is an easy four letter name. Then they begin the letter and I write in the words as they go. Even when I choose one person to "read" this text aloud, everyone pitches in with a word as soon as they work it out. This is something that I bring up later as we debrief on the four texts.

They can work out the beginning pretty easily because there are only limited words that it could be. "I am sorry to tell you that I do not love you anymore." At this point, there's much laughing and someone shouts out, "Oh, it's a 'Dear John Letter'!" They have the background knowledge to know that a 'Dear John Letter' is a letter in which someone breaks up with another. This knowledge guides the adults as they finish the rest of the letter (with much laughter). Struggling readers have not read as much, and so they often lack the background knowledge that more proficient readers have. To become proficient and to develop background knowledge, all students need time to read. Ironically, proficient readers are, most often, given more time to read while struggling readers are drilled on isolated skills (Allen 1995).

The rest of the letter reads, "I am in love with your brother. I hope you understand. Have a nice day. Sincerely, Mary."

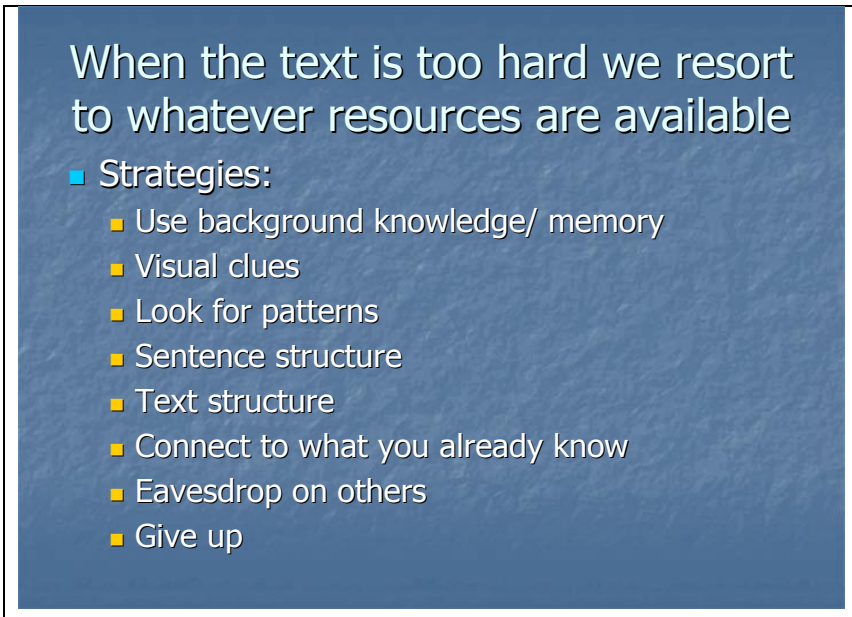
I ask the mentors how they were able to work out this text so quickly when there were no letters, but they could not work out the one with no consonants. Of course they know the text structure of a letter, but they also know that it should make sense.

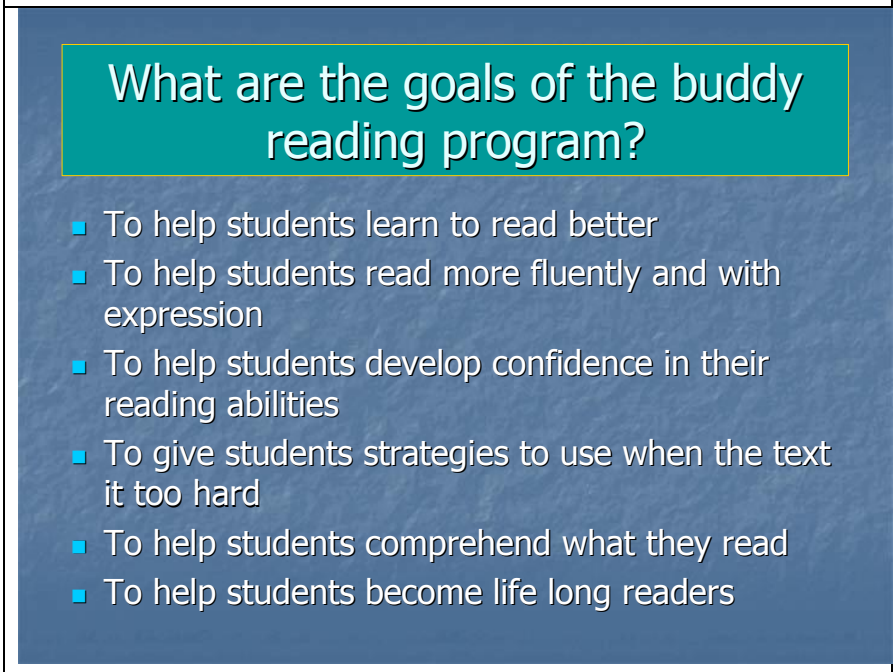
Struggling readers, on the other hand, often do not realize that reading is supposed to make sense (Allen 2000).

Next we reviewed the last few slides and discussed the strategies that they had used as they were figuring out the texts. For example, when reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, the mentor who was reading aloud noticed the pattern. She also noticed that the line "but he was still hungry" repeated. She also recognized that "th_" was the word "the". Another mentor recognized this book as one she had read to her own children. She used her memory and background knowledge of the text to work out what it said.

When reading *The Frog Price Continued*, the mentors worked together to work out what they text said. Struggling readers often eavesdrop on others, or wait for someone else to help them work out the words. Eventually, the mentors gave up on this text – a coping strategy struggling readers use as well.

I discussed the strategies that the mentors had identified with them. Then I shared with them a prepared list of what readers do when the text is too difficult. Many of the strategies they identified were the same as those on my prepared list. However, they had identified many more strategies *after* doing this activity than they could before doing the activity.





One thing that struggling readers do not realize is that anyone, even proficient readers, struggle with texts. "The struggle isn't the issue; the issue is what the reader does when the text gets tough" (Beers 2003 p.15). As teachers and mentors, we need to "teach student how to struggle successfully with a text" (p 16).

Teaching student to struggle successfully with a text and to help the students improve in their overall reading ability is the goal of the Buddy Reading Programme. To help students struggle successfully the mentors need to know some strategies they can use to help the student. I gave them the handout of strategies on the following page. This was available for them to use as they worked one to one with the middle school students. My goal in the training session was to teach the mentors many strategies to use with their student. The initial strategies that the mentors thought of, rereading, looking up words in a dictionary, and using context clues, are limited. I wanted to make sure they had numerous other strategies

to use as they worked with their students. Ultimately, my hope was that they would be able to use these strategies any time they work with a struggling student, and not just in the Buddy Reading Programme. Since many of the mentors are also involved in community, after school, and church tutoring programs, my hope is that by teaching them these strategies, they will be able to teach others the strategies and good teaching and learning will continue beyond this program. However, that is beyond the scope of this research.

What are some strategies for helping struggling readers?

Our goal is not to make this time feel like the student is sitting in class answering questions or doing worksheets. The idea is to make it more like "lap time reading" that we would do with small children. We want to help students think about what they are reading, and help guide them toward automatically using strategies on their own. It is okay to stop reading periodically and talk about the text and the strategies they are using.

Connect:

Help students build connections between the text and themselves, other texts, and the world.

For example:

- Ask questions like "Do you know anyone who acts like that?", "Has that ever happened to you?", "How did you feel when…?"
- Tell them your own connections like "This reminds me of the time that…"
- "I read another book that reminded me of this…"
- "Remember when we read _____. This author writes in a similar way because…"
- "I saw ____ on the news last night. This paragraph reminds me of that because…"
- Sometimes they may be reading about something they have no background knowledge of. This makes it harder to understand the text. You can help provide background knowledge for them by telling them what you know about a topic.

Visualize:

Help student picture what they are reading. They should always have a "movie in their mind" as they read.

- the student can illustrate a scene they have read
- the student might describe what a character or place looks like
- talk about the way the author uses details to make you feel like you are there

Predict:

Good readers think about what is going to happen next.

- Stop periodically and ask the student to predict what will happen next. Have them evaluate their predictions.
- Look for recurring patterns in the text or between different texts by the same author.

Question:

Good readers wonder. Encourage your student to ask questions about the reading. Some questions may not be answered in the text. That is okay. If they are asking questions, they are thinking about what they are reading.

- Model your questions. Say "I wonder…" Ask what the student thinks.
- Encourage them to ask questions too.

Clarify:

Sometimes we get mixed up and need to clarify what we have read.

- Periodically, stop and ask the student to tell you what he or she has read. If they are mixed up or do not understand a section, they can go back and reread it.
- Clarify meanings of any unknown words.
- Point out parts that you find interesting or parts that are confusing

Evaluate:

Good readers think about what they have read and make decisions about books, characters, authors, etc. For example:

- Discuss whether or not a character's actions were believable.
- Discuss why each of you did or did not like a particular book or author.
- Decide if a text is too hard, too easy, or just right. Decide when it is time to abandon a book and choose something else. It is okay to not finish a book that the student does not like.
- Discuss things you learned from your reading. Discuss things that surprised you as you read.

Bookmarks:

An easy way to keep track of ideas to discuss is by writing them on a bookmark. I will put a variety of difference bookmarks in your student's folder to help you if you need more ideas.

If a student gets stuck on a word:

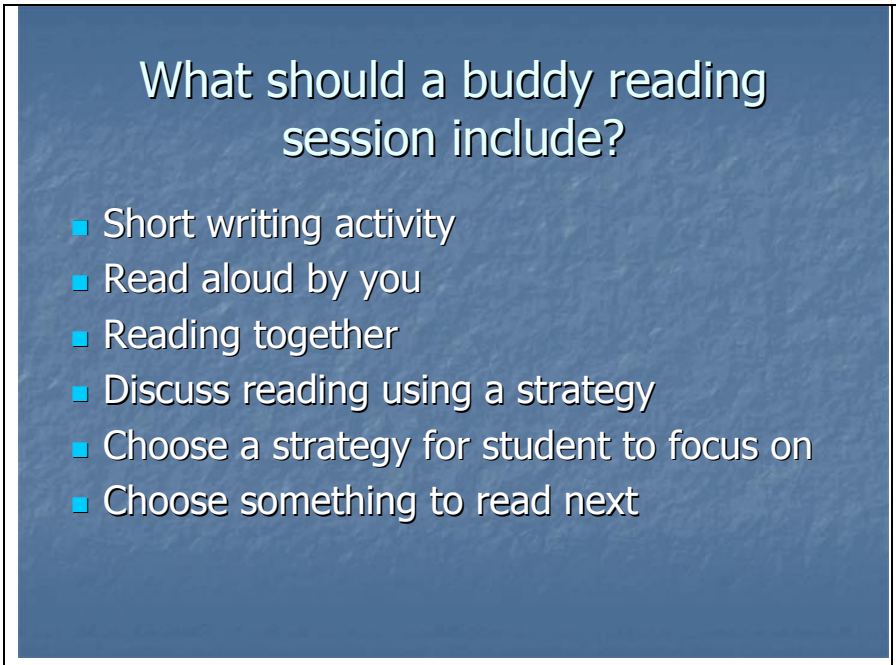
- Do not just tell them the correct word. If you do, they will start to depend on this and will not develop any strategies for figuring it out. Give the student time to try to figure it out.
- If they ask you the word without trying it, tell them to give it a try. Tell them when they have gotten it correct.
- Point to the first letter and have them sound it out. (Using strips of paper to isolate the letter is easier than using your fingers.)
- Point out a chunk of the word that they might know.
- If they student still cannot figure it out, help them. Make them repeat the word so they know how to say it correctly.

If a student reads a word or section incorrectly:

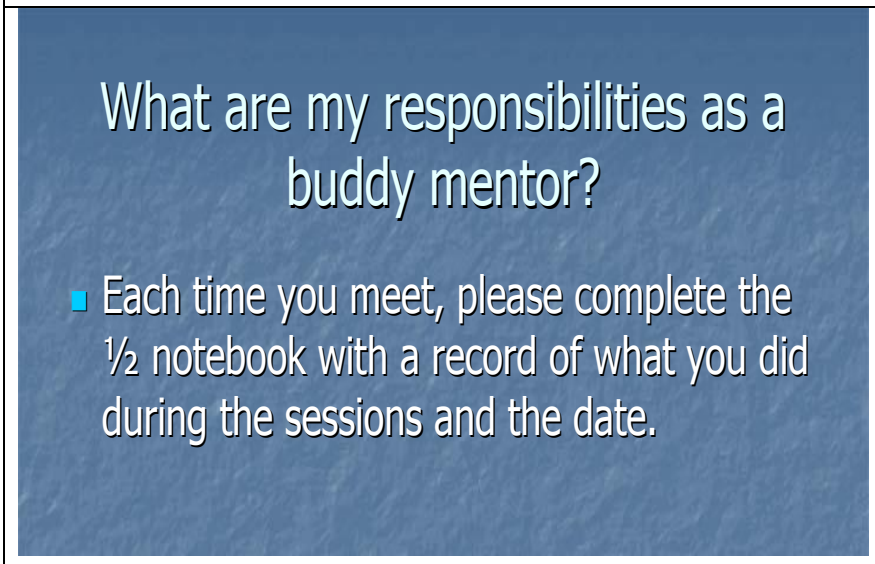
- Decide if it makes a big difference in the meaning. For example, students often read "the" instead of "a". This change does not make a big difference, so you can ignore it.
- However, if they read "elephant" instead of "elegant" the text will not make sense. You may tell them to reread that sentence, or ask them if what they read makes sense.
- If they skip words or lines, ask the student to reread it.
- It is important to help the students realize that reading should make sense. If they have struggled to read for a long time, they might not realize that reading should make sense. This is a big factor in why they are still struggling in middle school.

If the student has trouble reading a line on the page and skips to another line:

- Try using an index card to help them keep their spot on the page. In middle school, we do not want them to point to each word individually. This causes them to read word by word, and it becomes difficult to understand the text as a whole. Instead, we want them to read complete sentences, phrases, and paragraphs. Using an index card shows a whole line at a time, rather than just one word.
- As the student improves, they can use the index card to show 3-4 lines at a time. Eventually, they will no longer need the index card.



In the next portion of the training, I included the elements that I wanted to be sure were included in each session. Because there are many different mentors meeting with students at many different times, I wanted to be sure that some elements of the sessions were the same so all students were learning a variety of meaningful activities.



Each time the mentor met with his or her buddy, I asked them to write in a ½ notebook. This was just a Composition notebook which had been cut in half horizontally on a table saw. I often use these small notebooks with students. They save money (two for the price of one) but are also less intimidating for students. The small size is often less daunting than an entire blank page. I decided to use the same for the mentors. Following each session, they wrote notes to me about what they did during the session. This gave us a place to communicate with each other. They could ask me questions or tell me about any struggles they had during the session. I offered suggestions and was able to get a feel for how their

sessions were going. The notebook was my main method of communication with many of the mentors, although we also used e-mail throughout the week, as needed.

Directions for the mentors:

Using your ½ notebook:

The half notebook is a way for you and me to communicate with each other. It is also a way for you to keep a record of your sessions throughout the year so you can see the progress your students has made.

Each time you meet:

- write the date
- give a basic synopsis of what you did during the session
- tell what went well
- tell what did not go so well, or did not work at all
- tell what strategies you worked on, and what the student will work on during the week
- ask any questions you have for me.

I will read your notes each week, answer questions, make suggestions, and generally try to support your work in any way I can.

The notes you write are what I'll use to write my reports to justify the buddy reading program both for the grant that provided the money to fund the program and to the school for allowing us to use school time. Your notes, including quotes, will also be used as part of my research study through the University of Sussex. Your name and any personal or identifying information will not be shared.

Buddy Reading Sessions

When you arrive at [redacted]:

- sign in at Main Office
- Come to room 246 to pick up materials (folder, pencil, ½ notebook)
- Choose 3-4 different texts. When you meet, the student can choose the one he or she is most interested in.
- Pick up student from class.
- Go to your assigned area with student

Activities that each buddy reading session should include:

- some sort of short writing activity - a written conversation, letter, illustration and caption about a text read, discuss the chapters you both read in the same book since you last met. You might want to discuss how things went with their first grade buddy, how classes are going, what they're reading in class or for fun, or if they used the strategy you focused on last time and how it went for them. (Put these in the student's folder)
- short read aloud – a poem, article, section of a book you're reading, kid's book, etc. You read to the student so they can hear what fluent reading sounds like.
- read together – student reads aloud to you
- discuss reading/ use one strategy
- find one thing to work on during next week – using the strategy from today, going back and rereading to make sure something makes sense, adding expression to reading, reading more fluently, etc.

- discuss what to read for your next meeting – check out books as needed (from library or book room). You can both check out the same books and read a few chapters to discuss the next time.

Escort student back to class (so they aren't counted late or absent, and so they aren't wandering the halls) Write notes, comments, questions, etc. from this week's meeting in ½ notebook. Return all materials to room 246. Debrief with Mrs. Dewing as needed.

Training Middle School Students as Buddy Mentors

Students were trained to work with their buddies in a training session in October just before they met with their buddies for the first time. The agenda for the training session is below. Students also had a list of activities and descriptions that they kept in their folders. This helped remind them of activities they could complete and helped to make the students more independent during the buddy sessions. Additional training occurred one to one as needed. Writing letters to students in response to their logs was one of the main ways that I gave students feedback and suggestions.

Student Training Session
Monday, October 13, 2008

Agenda

1. Pass out schedule and survey for middle school students to complete
2. Check on permission slips/ informed consent
3. Go over schedule for when they work with their buddy:
   - introduce yourself and give your buddy a name tag to wear
   - choose 1-2 books
   - get folder, paper, pencil, crayons and find a spot to work away from other people
   - writing activity
     - written conversation
     - buddy draws a picture and writes the story to go with it
     - make an alphabet book (only need to do one book early in year)
     - after reading, buddy draws a picture from the book and writes about it.
   - read to buddy
     - talk about book (characters, setting, problem, what happened, etc.)
     - have your buddy retell the story
   - buddy reads to you
     - have buddy reread a book he or she already knows and read a new book
     - start with a "picture walk" for new books

- do not tell you buddy words they get stuck on, help them to figure it out (how does it start? Do you know part of the word?, etc.)
- use "masking" when needed
- review books your buddy knows well, and choose new ones to read

- word activity or game
  - rainbow writing
  - letter boxes
  - flash cards
  - magnetic letters/ building words
  - words I am learning/ words I know
  - review known words from week to week
  - sentence building game
  - some games will be available later this year
- check out a book

  This will be how you end your sessions later in the year. When we are ready to begin this, I will explain to you what to do.
- At the end of your session together, return all books and materials to their place, and pick up your area. Before you return to your class, make sure you complete the short Record Sheet. Place it in your buddy's folder.

4. Show where materials are
5. Go over Record sheets
6. Go over tomorrow's schedule and give students passes from class

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Buddy Reading Record Sheet

Your Name_____ Date _____</td><td rowspan="3">In this space, write me a note telling me how things are going in general. Please answer any questions that I asked you in my letter. Use the back if you need more space.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reading

Title of the book you read aloud:

Title of the book your buddy brought to read to you:

Title of new book your buddy read to you:</td><td>Writing activities you did:

(record any sentences your buddy wrote or made using sentence building cards.)</td><td>Words on the “Words I’m learning” chart:

Activities we did to work on the words:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Things my buddy is doing well with or improving at:</td><td>Things to teach my buddy or things to keep working on:</td><td>Questions I have or things I need help with:</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix B: Budget and Books

Budget

I applied for a grant to fund the Buddy Reading Program. The Jordan Fundamentals Grant provided grants of 2,500 or 10,000 USD to teachers in high poverty schools to provide enhanced learning opportunities for students. I was awarded 2,500 for the program.

I purchased good quality used books on eBay. I bought about 600 books for 475 USD. I found a bookshelf in storage and was able to have it moved to my classroom for no cost. I spent a day at a large bookstore in a nearby city and spent about 800 USD on hardback children's books. I decided that the paperbacks I had purchased on eBay would stay in the classroom and the first graders would check out and take home only the hardback books because they are more durable. The hardback books were the ones the middle school students read and recorded.

A portion of my budget was used to purchase hands-on activities for the students. In December, my school's PTO awarded the programme 200 USD to purchase some of these materials, which were available for students to use in January. I also made some of the materials, such as flash cards and sentence building strips, on my own. These were available for the students to use right away in October, and were very helpful to the middle school students as they were working with the elementary buddies. A portion of the budget went to the purchase of professional books for a professional library which I shared with adult mentors and other teachers. Additional money was used for storage and technology.

Finally, the remainder of the budget was used for the celebration in May. I purchased a book for each of the students who participated in the Buddy Reading Programme and refreshments for the celebration. The complete budget is in Table 10B and the list of books purchased is in Table 11B.

Table 10B: Budget

Date	Vendor	Item	Price	Balance
Jordan Fundamentals Grant				$2,500
Oct. 4, 2008	Ebay	Books (list of titles attached)	$475.87	$2024.13
Oct. 9, 2008	Scholastic	Books (list of titles attached)	$47.00	$1977.13
Oct. 12, 2008	Big Lots!	30 Book tubs	$30.00	$1947.13
Oct. 12, 2008	Kohl's	Books and plush	$32.10	$1915.03
Oct. 12, 2008	Dunkin' Donuts	25 munchkins for volunteer training session	4.99	$1910.04
Oct. 24	Kohl's	Plush	5.35	$1904.69
Nov. 17	Amazon.com	Professional books	$383.58	$1521.11
Nov. 21	Heinemann	Nancie Atwell kit	$124.00	$1397.11
Dec. 1	Barnes & Noble	Children's books	$798.76	$598.35
Nov. 13, 2008	Wal Mart	Magnetic letters	$19.21	$579.14
Nov. 14, 2008	Applestore.com	2 iPods	$169.06	$410.08
Nov. 17	Amazon.com	2 Griffin iTalk digital voice recorder & professional literature	$81.86	$328.22
Dec. 5	Fry's	CDs, microphones, etc	$9.99	$318.23
Dec. 5	Fry's	CDs, microphones, etc	$62.95	$255.28
12/22/08	Barnes and Noble	Books	$44.78	$210.50
12/19/08	PTO + $200			$410.50
1/3/09	Lakeshore Learning	Games and hands-on	$200.65	$209.85
2/28/09	Islerbooks	Prof. books	$55.00	$154.85
3/12/09	Scholastic Book sales	Books for celebration	$87.82	$67.03
5/12/09	Various	Celebration	$67.03	$0

Table 11B: Books Purchased for Programme

Title	Author	Category
Annie and the Wild Animals	Brett, Jan	Jan Brett
Gingerbread Baby	Brett, Jan	Jan Brett
Goldilocks and the Three Bears	Brett, Jan	Jan Brett
The Hat	Brett, Jan	Jan Brett
Town Mouse Country Mouse	Brett, Jan	Jan Brett
Frog and Toad Are Friends	Lobel, Arnold	Frog and Toad
Days with Frog and Toad	Lobel, Arnold	Frog and Toad

Frog and Toad All Year	Lobel, Arnold	Frog and Toad
Corduroy	Freeman, Don	Corduroy
Corduroy	Freeman, Don	Corduroy
A Pocket for Corduroy	Freeman, Don	Corduroy
Corduroy's Best Halloween Ever	Freeman, Don	Corduroy
Madeline and the Gypsies	Bemelans, Ludwig	Madeline
Madeline	Bemelans, Ludwig	Madeline
Madeline's Rescue	Bemelans, Ludwig	Madeline
Madeline in London	Bemelans, Ludwig	Madeline
Madeline's Rescue	Bemelans, Ludwig	Madeline
Madeline and the Bad Hat	Bemelans, Ludwig	Madeline
Cafeteria Lady from the Black Lagoon	Thaler, Mike	Black Lagoon
Custodian from the Black Lagoon	Thaler, Mike	Black Lagoon
Bully from the Black Lagoon	Thaler, Mike	Black Lagoon
Teacher from the Black Lagoon	Thaler, Mike	Black Lagoon
Gym Teacher from the Black Lagoon	Thaler, Mike	Black Lagoon
Vice Principal from the Black Lagoon	Thaler, Mike	Black Lagoon
Alexander Who's Not (Do you Hear Me? I Mean it!) Going to Move	Viorst, Judith	Judith Viorst
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very bad Day	Viorst, Judith	Judith Viorst
Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday	Viorst, Judith	Judith Viorst
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very bad Day	Viorst, Judith	Judith Viorst
Super-Completely and Totally and Messiest	Viorst, Judith	Judith Viorst
If you Take a Mouse to the Movies	Numeroff, Laura	Mouse Books
If you Give a Mouse a Cookie	Numeroff, Laura	Mouse Books
If you Give a Pig a Pancake	Numeroff, Laura	Mouse Books
If you Give a Moose a Muffin	Numeroff, Laura	Mouse Books
One Maine Morning	McCloskey, Robert	Robert McCloskey
Lentil	McCloskey, Robert	Robert McCloskey
Blueberries for Sal	McCloskey, Robert	Robert McCloskey
Make Way for Ducklings	McCloskey, Robert	Robert McCloskey
Frederick	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
Matthew's Dream	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
Swimmy	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
An Extraordinary Egg	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
Busy Year, A	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
Frederick	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
Little Blue and Little Yellow	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
Fish is Fish	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
Flea Story, A	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
Inch by Inch	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
Six Crows	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni
It's Mine!	Lionni, Leo	Leo Lionni

Franklin in the Dark	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's New Friend	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin Fibs	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin Plays the Game	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin and the Thunderstorm	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Halloween	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Blanket	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin is Messy	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin Goes to the Hospital	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin is Lost	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Class Trip	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Christmas Gift	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin Runs Away	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Baby Sister	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin Plants a Tree	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Finder's Keepers for Franklin	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin is Bossy	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin Wants a Pet	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin Says Sorry	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Valentine	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin and the Baby	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Secret Club	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's School Play	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Pond Phantom	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Pumpkin	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin Stays Up	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Reading Club	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin Wants a Badge	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin And the Hero	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Bad Day	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin's Neighborhood	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Franklin Rides a Bike	Bourgeois, Paulette	Franklin
Foolish Tortoise, The	Carle, Eric	Eric Carle
Thank you, Brother Bear	Carle, Eric	Eric Carle
House for a hermit Crab, A	Carle, Eric	Eric Carle
Clifford: Time for School	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford, I Love you	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford: Christmas Wishes	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford's Puppy Fun	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford: The Little Red Sled	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford: Halloween Howl	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford The Big Red Dog	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford: Teacher's Pet	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford: The Small Red Puppy	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford's Kitten	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford's Busy Week	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford

Clifford and the Grouchy Neighbors	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford at the Circus	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford's Happy Mother's Day	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford Grown Up	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford's Manners	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford's Class Trip	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford Goes to Dog School	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford's Good Deeds	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford's Hiccups	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Snowlie Rolie	Joyce, William	holidays
Ten Timid Ghosts	O'Connell, Jennifer	holidays
Olive, The Other Reindeer	Seibold, J. Otto & Vivian Walsh	holidays
Monster Math	Miranda, Anne	holidays
Biggest Pumpkin Ever, The	Kroll, Steven	holidays
Winnie the Pooh's Christmas	Talkington, Bruce	holidays
I Wish Santa Came By Helicopter	Haley, Amanda	holidays
Biggest Snowball Ever!	Rogan, John	holidays
Max's Chocolate Chicken	Wells, Rosemary	holidays
Biggest Valentine Ever, The	Kroll, Steven	holidays
Wheels	Nayer, Judy	vehicles
Shortcut	Crews, Donald	vehicles
Train Ride, The	Crebbin, June	vehicles
Drummer Hoff	Emberley, Barbara	vehicles
Cross a Bridge	Hunter, Ryan Ann	vehicles
Dot the Fire Dog	Desimini, Lisa	vehicles
Tonka: Working Hard with the Busy Fire Truck	Horowitz, Jordan	vehicles
All Aboard, A True Train Story!	Kuklin. Susan	vehicles
Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky	Dayrell, Elphinstone	international
Turnip, The	Morgan, Pierr	international
Story of Jumping Mouse, The	Steptoe, John	international
Not a Copper Penny in Me House	Gunning, Monica	international
Tale of the Mandarin Ducks, The	Paterson, Katherine	international
Too Many Tamales	Soto, Gary	international
Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears	Aardema, Verna	international
Little Drummer Boy, The	Keats, Ezra Jack	songs & poems
Itsy Bitsy Spider, The	Trapani, Iza	songs & poems
I'm a Little Teapot	Trapani, Iza	songs & poems
Mary Wore Her Red Dress	Peef, Merle	songs & poems
Eentsy Weentsy Spider	Cole, Joanna & Stephanie Calmenson	songs & poems
Take Me out of the Bathtub	Katz, Alan	songs & poems
I Know an Old Woman	Karas, G. Brian	songs & poems
I See the Moon	Pfister, Marcus	songs & poems
Oh Where, Oh Where Has My little Dog	Trapani, Iza	songs & poems

Gone?		
Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star	Trapani, Iza	songs & poems
Hush Little Baby	Long, Sylvia	songs & poems
Gingerbread Man, The	McCafferty, Catherine	fairy tales & legends
Pecos Bill	Kellogg, Steven	fairy tales & legends
Paper Bag Princess, The	Munsch, Robert N.	fairy tales & legends
Ugly Duckling, The	Moore, Lillian	fairy tales & legends
True Story of the Three Little Pigs, The	Scieszka, Jon	fairy tales & legends
Thumbelina	Anderson, Hans Christian Zimmermann, H.	fairy tales & legends
Henny Penny	Werner	fairy tales & legends
"I Can't" said the Ant	Cameron, Polly	easy to read
Chicka Chicka Boom Boom	Martin, Bill	easy to read
Flying	Crews, Donald	easy to read
Saturday Mornings	Hancock, Joelie	easy to read
Little Bird	Pirotta, Saviour	easy to read
Noisy Breakfast	Blonder, Ellen	easy to read
When Cows Come Home	Harrison, David L.	animals
Pinduli	Cannon, Janell	animals
Dear Mrs. LaRue	Teague, Mark	animals
Zoo Looking	Fox, Mem	animals
Farmer Duck	Waddell, Martin	animals
Kissing Hand, The	Penn, Audrey	animals
Big Red Barn	Bone, Felicia	animals
Have You Seen My Duckling?	Tafuri, Nancy	animals
In The Forest	Ets, Marie Hall	animals
Bently & Egg	Joyce, William	animals
I Wish I Were a Butterfly	Young, Ed	animals
Miss Spider's Wedding	Kirk, David	animals
Dinosaur Bob	Joyce, William	animals
Deep in the Swamp	Bateman, Donna M.	animals
Anatole	Titus, Eve	animals
Just Keep Swimming (Finding Nemo)	Disney	animals
Best Dad in the Sea (Finding Nemo)	Disney	animals
Selfish Crocodile, The	Charles, Faustin & Michael Terry	animals
Crazy About Horses Poster Book	Knight, Dodo	animals
Cock-a-doodle-doo! Barnyard Hullabaloo	Andreae, Giles	animals
Little Rabbit's Loose Tooth	Bate, Lucy	animals
Calico Picks a Puppy	Tildes, Phyllis Limbacher	animals
Year at Maple Hill Farm, The	Provensen, Alice and Martin	animals
Smallest Stegosaurus, The	Sweat, Lynn	animals
Borreguita and the Coyote	Aardema, Verna	animals

Where's My Teddy	Alborough, Jez	animals
Duckat	Gordon, Gaelyn	animals
Little Fox Goes to the End of the World	Tompert, Ann	animals
Pigs Aplenty, Pigs Galore!	McPhail, David	animals
Mama Rex and T Shop for Shoes	Vail, Rachel	animals
Oh, Tucker!	Kroll, Steven	animals
Donkey's Dream, The	Berger, Barbara Helen	animals
Moe the Dog in Tropical paradise	Stanley, Diane	animals
How do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight?	Yolen, Jane & Mark Teague	animals
Mama Rex and T Turn off the TV	Vail, Rachel	animals
Pocket Full of Kisses, A	Penn, Audrey	animals
How to be a Practically Perfect Pig	Ward, Nick	animals
Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and The Bug Hungry bear, The	Wood, Don & Audrey	animals
Miss Spider's Tea Party	Kirk, David	animals
Rabbits & Raindrops	Arnosky, Jim	animals
Baby Whale's Journey	London, Jonathan	animals
Ice Cream Bear	Alborough, Jez	animals
Tiger Can't Sleep	Fore, S.J.	animals
Miss Spider's ABC	Kirk, David	animals
Mama Cat has Three Kittens	Fleming, Denise	animals
How Leo learned to Be King	Pfister, Marcus	animals
Can't You Sleep, Little Bear?	Waddell, Martin	animals
Bunny's Noisy Book	Brown, Margaret Wise	animals
Those Can-Do Pigs	McPhail, David	animals
McDuff Moves In	Wells, Rosemary	animals
Rattlesnake Dance	Arnosky, Jim	animals
Tessa's Tip-Tapping Toes	Crimi, Carolyn	animals
Little White Dog	Goodwin, Laura	animals
Elephant's on Board	MacDonald, Suse	animals
What Do You Do With a Kangaroo?	Mayer, Mercer	animals
Where's My Hug	Hest, Amy	animals
Down in the Woods in Sleepytime	Schaefer, Carole Lexa	animals
Bear Wants More	Wilson, Karma	animals
Where Have You Gone, Davy?	Weninger, Bridgette	animals
My Dinosaur	Weatherby, Mark Alan	animals
One Tiny Turtle	Davies, Nicola	animals
Counting on Calico	Tildes, Phyllis Limbacher	animals
Martha Speaks	Medaugh, Susan	animals
Pussy Willow	Brown, Margaret Wise	animals
Surprise Garden, The	Hall, Zoe	animals
Everglades	George, Jean Craighead	animals
April's Kittens	Newberry, Clare Turlay	animals
Just You and Me	McBratney, Sam	animals

Runaway Bunny, The	Brown, Margaret Wise	animals
Millions of Cats	Gag, Wanda	animals
Marsupial Sue	Lithgow, John	animals
Bad Boys	Palatini, Margie	animals
Little Bear's Trousers	Hissey, Jane	animals
Dora's Eggs	Sykes, Julie	animals
Just Dog	Oram, Hiawyn	animals
Mouse TV	Novak, Matt	animals
Jubal's Wish	Wood, Don & Audrey	animals
Relatives Came, The	Rylant, Cynthia	people
Stone Soup	Brown, Marcia	people
Little Mouse, The	Burton, Virginia Lee	people
Carrott Seed, The	Krauss, Ruth	people
Jake Baked the Cake	Hennessy, B.G.	people
Journey Cake, Ho!	Sawyer, Ruth	people
Always Room for one More	Leodhas, Sorche Nic	people
Tree is Nice, A	Udry, Janice May	people
Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin	Moss, Lloyd	people
Pocketful of Cricket, A	Caudill, Rebecca	people
Easter Bonnet Parade, The	Stephens, Monique Z.	people
Lyle, Lyle Crocodile	Waber, Bernard	people
Chrysanthemum	Henkes, Kevin	people
Talking Eggs, The	San Souci, Robert Dan	people
City Green	DiSalvo-Ryan, DyAnne	people
Parade	Crews, Donald	people
Jamaica's Find	Havill, Juanita	people
White Snow, Bright Snow	Tresselt, Alvin	people
Flower Girl Butterflies	Howard, Elizabeth Fitzgerald	people
Monster Night at Grandma's House	Peck, Richard	people
Mrs. Toggle's Class Picture Day	Pulver, Robin	people
Some Birthday!	Polacco, Patricia	people
Paper Party, The	Freeman, Don	people
When Sophie Gets Angry - Really, Really Angry	Bang, Molly	people
Pumpkin Pumpkin	Titherington, Jeanne	people
My Friends	Gomi, Taro	people
No More Water in the Tub	Arnold, Ted	people
Allie's Basketball Dream	Barber, Barbara E.	people
Jumanji	Van Allsburg, Chris	people
Five-Dog Night, The	Christelow, Eileen	people
Zelda and Ivy	Kvasnosky, Laura McGee	people
I Love You So Much	Norac, Carl	people
Pigsty	Teague, Mark	people
I Hate Goodbyes!	Szaj, Kathleen C.	people

No Jumping on the Bed	Arnold, Ted	people
Five Chinese Brothers, The	Bishop, Claire Huchett	people
Wild Toboggan Ride, The	Reid, Suzan	people
Rough Face Girl, The	Martin, Rafe	people
Rachel Fister's Blister	MacDonald, Amy	people
Sanji and the Baker	Tzannes, Robin and Korky Paul	people
Mirette on the High Wire	McCully, Emily Arnold	people
Nova's Ark	Kirk, David	people
Eggbert The Slightly Cracked Egg	Ross, Tom	people
Little House, The	Burton, Virginia Lee	people
Imogene's Antlers	Small, David	people
Peppe the Lamplighter	Bartone, Elisa	people
Boing! No Bouncing on the Bed	Seymour, Jane	people
Baby Dances, The	Henderson, Kathy	people
That's Good! That's Bad!	Cuyler, Margery	people
Today I Feel Silly	Curtis, Jamie Lee	people
Mike Fink	Kellogg, Steven	people
Big Sneeze, The	Brown, Ruth	people
Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash	Noble, Trinka Hakes	people
Book of Hugs, A	Ross, Dave	people
Daddies Boat, The	Monfried, Lucia	people
Big and Little A Book of Opposites	Scarry, Richard	easy to read
Patrick Patron Saint of Ireland	DePaola, Tommie	international
Spider Weaver, The	Musgrove, Margaret	international
If I Ran the School	Lansky, Bruce	songs & poems
Puppy Mudge Loves His Blanket	Rylant, Cynthia	easy to read
In the Tall, Tall Grass	Fleming, Denise	easy to read
Who Took the Cookies from the Cookie Jar?	Lass, Bonnie	songs & poems
Shoes	Winthrop, Elizabeth	easy to read
A Ride in the Crummy	Hines, Gary	vehicles
Girl Who Loved Wild Horses, The	Goble, Paul	international
Rooster Crows, The	Petersham, Maud and Miska	songs & poems
There's a Hole in My Pocket	Gibson, Akimi	songs & poems
Llama's Secret, The	Palacios, Argentina	international
Freight Train	Crews, Donald	vehicles
Truck	Crews, Donald	vehicles
Blue's Ready-to-Read Treasury	Santomero, Angela C.	easy to read
Click, Clack, Moo	Cronin, Doreen	funny books
Rain Came Down, The	Shannon, David	funny books
Parts	Arnold, Ted	funny books
Calling Doctor Amelia	Parish, Herman	funny books
Zoom Broom	Palatini, Margie	funny books
Sponge Bob Love Pants	Pass, Erica	funny books
Show Me the Bunny	Banks, Steven	funny books

Giggle, Giggle, Quack	Cronin, Doreen	funny books
She's Wearing a Dead Bird on Her Head!	Lasky, Kathryn	funny books
Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs	Barrett, Judi	funny books
Duck on a Bike	Shannon, David	funny books
D.W. the Picky Eater	Brown, Marcia	funny books
Elmer Blunt's Open house	Novak, Matt	funny books
No, David!	Shannon, David	funny books
David Gets in Trouble	Shannon, David	funny books
Space Witch	Freeman, Don	holidays
Little Old Lady Who was Not Afraid of Anything, The	Williams, Linda	holidays
Harold and the North Pole	Johnson, Crockett	holidays
Herchel and the Hanukkah Goblins	Kimmel, Eric	holidays
Barney's Favorite Easter Stories	Davis, Guy	holidays
Ten Timid Ghosts on a Christmas Night	O'Connell, Jennifer	holidays
Teddy's Snowy Day	Beck, Ian	holidays
Arthur's Christmas Cookies	Hoban, Lillian	holidays
Turkey Saves the Day, The	Canning, Shelagh	holidays
Wild Toboggan Ride, The	Reid, Suzann	holidays
Amazing Christmas Extravaganza, The	Shannon, David	holidays
Santa Mouse, Where Are You?	Brown, Michael	holidays
Polar Express, The	Van Allsburg, Chris	holidays
This is Biscuit	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Biscuit and the Cat	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Biscuit and the Hen	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Biscuit's Tub Fun	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Biscuit's Trick	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Biscuit and the Box	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Biscuit and Sam	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Biscuit and the Nest	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Biscuit and the Duck	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Biscuit and the Kittens	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Biscuit and the Frog	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Biscuit	Capucilli, Alyssa Satin	Biscuit
Curious George is happy	Hapka, Catherine	Biscuit
The Best!	Hapka, Catherine	Curious George
Big and Little	Hapka, Catherine	Curious George
Fun, Fun, Fun	Hapka, Catherine	Curious George
Let's Play	Hapka, Catherine	Curious George
See George Take a Job	Hapka, Catherine	Curious George
What Does George Like	Hapka, Catherine	Curious George
Snow	Hapka, Catherine	Curious George
Costumes	Hapka, Catherine	Curious George
How Many?	Hapka, Catherine	Curious George
From ABC to XYZ	Hapka, Catherine	Curious George
Magic School Bus Fights Germs	Cole, Joanna	Magic School Bus

Magic School Bus Has a Heart	Cole, Joanna	Magic School Bus
Magic School Bus Flies with the Dinosaurs	Cole, Joanna	Magic School Bus
Magic School Bus Gets Caught in a Web	Cole, Joanna	Magic School Bus
Magic School Bus at the First Thanksgiving	Cole, Joanna	Magic School Bus
Magic School Bus in the Bat Cave	Cole, Joanna	Magic School Bus
Magic School Bus Arctic Adventure	Cole, Joanna	Magic School Bus
Magic School Bus Wild Leaf Ride	Cole, Joanna	Magic School Bus
Magic School Bus and the Shark Adventure	Cole, Joanna	Magic School Bus
Magic School Bus Rides the Wind	Cole, Joanna	Magic School Bus
Magic School Bus Weathers the Storm	Cole, Joanna	Magic School Bus
Rescue Dogs	Frost, Nerida	animals
Baby Dolphin's Tale	Evans, Lynette	animals
Crickets	Algie, Amy	animals
Helping Hands	Evans, Lynette	animals
Keeping Baby Safe	Davidson, Avelyn	animals
Living Things	Avery, Dorothy	animals
Hurricanes!	Sweeney, Alyse	science
Lightning!	Bauer, Jeff	science
Floods!	Sweeney, Alyse	science
Blizzards!	Charlesworth, Eric	science
Tornadoes!	Martin, Justin McCory	science
Weather!	Martin, Justin McCory	science
Sun, The	Martin, Justin McCory	science
Earth, The	Duhamel, Madelyn	science
Moon, The	Carlin, Lydia	science
Bats	Wood, Lily	science
Penguins	Zoehfeld, Kathleen Weidner	science
Thunder and Lightening	Pfeffer, Wendy	science
Sharks	Guiberson, Brenda Z.	science
Spiders	Otto, Carolyn B.	science
Tornadoes	Cassie, Brian	science
Stormy Day Rescue, The	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Mystery of the Kibble Crook, The	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Tummy Trouble	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Winter Ice is Nice!	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford's Loose Tooth	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Snow Dog, The	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Dog Who Cried "Woof"!, The	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Show-and-Tell Surprise, The	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Time for School	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Snow Champion, The	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Clifford for President	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Big Itch, The	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Big White Ghost, The	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Picking Apples and Pumpkins	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford

Ice Race, The	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Big Bad Cold, The	Bridwell, Norman	Clifford
Hop In!	Small- Gamby, Julie	easy to read
Not Dots	Tarlow, Ellen	easy to read
Pet, The	Jasmine, Linda	easy to read
Lot of Dogs, A	Tarlow, Ellen	easy to read
Big Kids Day	Cherrington, Janelle	easy to read
Run, Ss, Run	Chapman, Cindy	easy to read
Dan Ran	Curry, Don L.	easy to read
I See It	Shefelbine, John	easy to read
What is Big?	Alexander, Francie	easy to read
Ten Pens	Kim, Su Yi	easy to read
Fireman Ken	Tarlow, Ellen	easy to read
At a Farm	Wagner, Rick	easy to read
Bus, The	Alvarez, Joaquim	easy to read
Pam and a Map	Alexander, Francie	easy to read
Hat, A	Blevins, Wiley	easy to read
Cock-a-doodle-doo! Hooooooooo!	Manning, Mick	animals
Beetle Bop	Fleming, Denise	animals
Mine-O-Saur, The	Bardhan-Quallen, Sudipta	animals
Skippyjon Jones and the Big Bones	Schachner, Judy	animals
If you Give a Moose a Muffin	Numeroff, Laura	mouse Books
If you Give a Pig a Pancake	Numeroff, Laura	mouse Books
If You Take a Mouse to School	Numeroff, Laura	mouse Books
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very bad Day	Viorst, Judith	Judith Viorst
Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday	Viorst, Judith	Judith Viorst
Alexander, Who's Not (Do You Hear Me? I Mean It!) Going to Move	Viorst, Judith	Judith Viorst
Bad Case of the Stripes, A	Shannon, David	funny books
Dooby Dooby Moo	Shannon, David	funny books
LaRue for Mayor	Teague, Mark	funny books
Grasshopper on the Road	Lobel, Arnold	Frog and Toad
Days with Frog and Toad	Lobel, Arnold	Frog and Toad
Frog and Toad Together	Lobel, Arnold	Frog and Toad
Frog and Toad Are Friends	Lobel, Arnold	Frog and Toad
Mouse Soup	Lobel, Arnold	Frog and Toad
Owl At Home	Lobel, Arnold	Frog and Toad
Junie B. Jones and the Yucky Blucky Fruitcake	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones Smells Something Fishy	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones Has a Peep in Her Pocket	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones First Graders (At Last)	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones Shipwrecked	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones Boss of Lunch	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones

Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones First Graders one-Man Band	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones and her Big Fat Mouth	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. First Grader Boo… and I Mean It!	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. First Grader Aloha-ha-ha	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones and the Meanie Jim's Birthday	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones is a Graduation Girl	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. First Grader Cheater Pants	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones and the Mushy Gushy Valentine	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones is a Beauty Shop Guy	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones is Not a Crook	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones Has a Monster Under Her Bed	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones and Some Sneaky Peeky Spying	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. First Grader Toothless Wonder	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones Loves Handsome Warren	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones is Captain Field Day	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones and the Stupid Smelly Bus	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones is (almost) a Flower Girl	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Junie B. Jones is a Party Animal	Park, Barbara	Junie B. Jones
Midnight on the Moon	Osborne, Mary Pope	Magic Tree House
Sunset of the Sabertooth	Osborne, Mary Pope	Magic Tree House
Afternoon on the Amazon	Osborne, Mary Pope	Magic Tree House
Night of the Ninjas	Osborne, Mary Pope	Magic Tree House
Pirates Past Noon	Osborne, Mary Pope	Magic Tree House
Mummies in the Morning	Osborne, Mary Pope	Magic Tree House
The Knight at Dawn	Osborne, Mary Pope	Magic Tree House
Dinosaurs Before Dark	Osborne, Mary Pope	Magic Tree House
Fancy Nancy's Favorite Fancy Words	O'Connor, Jane	teacher's shelf
Dinosaurs in Action	Matthews, Rupert	animals
Dinosaur Combat	Matthews, Rupert	animals
Dinosaur Food	Matthews, Rupert	animals
Dinosaur Families	Matthews, Rupert	animals
Seabiscuit The Wonder Horse	McCarthy, Meghan	for check-out
Thump, Quack, Moo	Cronin, Doreen	for check-out
Mister Seahorse	Carle, Eric	for check-out
Adventures of Morris the Moose, The	Wiseman, B.	for check-out
Where the Wild Things Are	Sendak, Maurice	for check-out
Stellaluna	Cannon, Janell	for check-out
Snowy Day, The	Keats, Ezra Jack	for check-out
Mitten, The	Brett, Jan	for check-out
Very Hungry Caterpillar, The	Carle, Eric	for check-out
You Can Do It!	Dungy, Tony	for check-out
Corduroy, Lost and Found	Hennessy, B.G.	for check-out
Frog and Toad Are Friends	Lobel, Arnold	for check-out

Frog and Toad Together	Lobel, Arnold	for check-out
Wild About Books	Kinsey, Judy	for check-out
Diary of a Fly	Cronin, Doreen	for check-out
Diary of a Spider	Cronin, Doreen	for check-out
Story of Babar, The	Brunhoff, Jean De	for check-out
There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly	Taback, Simms	for check-out
If You Take a Mouse to the Movies	Numeroff, Laura	for check-out
Curious George and the Firefighters	Hines, Anna Grossnickle	for check-out
Curious George at the Aquarium	Hines, Anna Grossnickle	for check-out
Curious George Feeds the Animals	Houghton Mifflin	for check-out
Merry Christmas, Curious George	Hapka, Catherine	for check-out
Christmas Story, The	Smee, Nicola	for check-out
Frances Collection, The	Hoban, Russell	for check-out
Nobody Here But Me	Viorst, Judith	for check-out
Flat Stanley	Brown, Jeff	for check-out
LaRue for Mayor	Teague, Mark	for check-out
For the Love of Autumn	Polacco, Patricia	for check-out
Curious George Rides a Bike	Rey, H.A.	for check-out
Whingdingdilly, The	Peet, Bill	for check-out
Cecily G. and the 9 Monkeys	Rey, H.A.	for check-out
Mouse Cookies and More: A Treasury	Numeroff, Laura	for check-out
Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse	Henkes, Kevin	for check-out
Very Busy Spider, The	Carle, Eric	for check-out
Sammy The Seal	Hoff, Syd	for check-out
Princess and the Pea, The	Cech, John	for check-out
Pirates Don't Change Diapers	Long, Melinda & David Shannon	for check-out
How I Became a Pirate	Long, Melinda & David Shannon	for check-out
Lilly's Big Day	Henkes, Kevin	for check-out
Elves and The Shoemaker, The	Cech, John	for check-out
Giggle, Giggle, Quack	Cronin, Doreen	for check-out
Cat in The Hat Comes Back, The	Seuss, Dr.	for check-out
Oh Say Can You Say Di-No-Saur?	Worth, Bonnie	for check-out
Put Me in the Zoo	Lopshire, Robert	for check-out
On Beyond Bugs! All About Insects	Rabe, Tish	for check-out
Go, Dog, Go!	Eastman, P.D.	for check-out
Cat in the Hat, The	Seuss, Dr.	for check-out
Chrysanthemum	Henkes, Kevin	for check-out
Dooby Dooby Moo	Cronin, Doreen	for check-out
Click, Clack, Moo	Cronin, Doreen	for check-out
Rainbow Fish, The	Pfister, Marcus	for check-out
Someone for Mr. Sussman	Polacco, Patricia	for check-out
Duck for President	Cronin, Doreen	for check-out

Corduroy	Freeman, Don	for check-out
Guess How Much I Love You	McBratney, Sam	for check-out
Very Lonely Firefly, The	Carle, Eric	for check-out
Bartholomew and the Oobleck	Seuss, Dr.	for check-out
500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins, The	Seuss, Dr.	for check-out
Papa, Please Get the Moon For Me	Carle, Eric	for check-out
Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are?	Seuss, Dr.	for check-out
Thidwick, The Big-Hearted Moose	Seuss, Dr.	for check-out
Lorax, The	Seuss, Dr.	for check-out
Horton Hears a Who	Seuss, Dr.	for check-out
Mad About Madeline, The Complete Tales	Bemelman, Ludwig	for check-out
Stealing Home	Burleigh, Robert	for check-out
Grouchy Ladybug, The	Carle, Eric	for check-out
Gingerbread Friends	Brett, Jan	for check-out
Three Show Bears, The	Brett, Jan	for check-out
Tikki Tikki Tembo	Mosel, Arlene	for check-out
Tico and the Golden Wings	Lionni, Leo	for check-out
Tops & Bottoms	Stevens, Janet	for check-out
Caps for Sale	Slobodkina, Esphyr	for check-out
Very Quiet Cricket, The	Carle, Eric	for check-out
Curious George Goes to the Hospital	Rey, Margaret & H.A.	for check-out
Leaf Man	Ehlert, Lois	for check-out
Curious George Takes a Job	Rey, H.A.	for check-out
Curious George	Rey, H.A.	for check-out
Stanley in Space	Brown, Jeff	
Flat Stanley	Brown, Jeff	
Stanley, Flat Again!	Brown, Jeff	
Invisible Stanley	Brown, Jeff	
Pippi Longstocking	Lindgren, Astrid	
Trolls, The	Horvath, Polly	
Dogs Rule and Cats Drool! A Flip Book	Dewin, Howie	
One Morning in Maine	McCloskey, Robert	
Pirates Don't Change Diapers	Long, Melinda & David Shannon	
Mommy, Carry Me Please!	Cabrera, Jane	
Blossom Comes Home	Herriot, James	
Story of Doctor Dolittle, The	Lofting, Hugh	
Strenga Nona	DePaola, Tommie	
Pete's A Pizza	Steig, William	
Sylvester and the Magic Pebble	Steig, William	
Amazing Bone, The	Steig, William	
Bubble Factory, The	DePaola, Tommie	
Goggles!	Keats, Ezra Jack	
Snowy Day, The	Keats, Ezra Jack	
Snip, Snip, Little Lambs	DePaola, Tommie	
Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs	DePaola, Tommie	
Goodnight Moon	Brown, Margaret Wise	

Ox-Cart Man	Hall, Donald
Ping	Flack, Marjorie and Kurt Wiese

Appendix C: Informed Consent

September 22, 2008

Dear Students and Parents,

Your English teacher has recommended you for the Buddy Reading Program during the 2008-2009 school year. In this program, you will be working with a first grader and helping him or her learn to read. About twice a month, the first grade class will come to our school for about an hour in the morning. During this time you will:

- read to your buddy
- listen as he or she reads to you
- do some writing and drawing
- play games
- check out books
- record a children's book on a CD for the first graders to check out and read at home

You'll also meet with an adult volunteer who will come to school to read with you two to three times a month. With your adult volunteer, you will:

- read to each other
- check out books
- write letters
- and do many of the same activities you're doing with your first grade buddy, except on a higher level

You will miss part of your third and fourth period classes on days that you meet with your first grade buddy. It will be your responsibility to complete any work or get any notes that you miss. You will meet with your adult mentor during your enrichment period.

The Buddy Reading Program is part of a research study I am conducting through the University of Sussex. As part of the research study, I will be observing you throughout the year as you work with your buddy and mentor, conducting interviews and surveys, listening to you read, and working to help improve your reading levels. As part of the study, all names and personal information will remain confidential. Participation in the Buddy Reading Program and the research is optional. You are free to withdraw from the research project at any time with no negative consequences.

I hope you will decide to participate in this exciting program. Please complete the permission slip below and return it to the main office or to Mrs. Dewing by **Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2008**.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Dewing

Mrs. Dewing
8th grade English
[contact information]

Please return the bottom portion of this letter to the main office or Mrs. Dewing by Wednesday, Oct. 1.

Student's Name _____ Grade_____

My student ☐ may/ ☐ may not participate in the buddy reading program. I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and be used for research purposes only. I understand that my student may withdraw from the program at any time.

Parent's signature _____
Student's signature _____

[redacted] School Year Release Forms
For all Preschool through 8th grade students

Please Print _____
Student's Name School Grade

Special Release Forms

[redacted] School Corporation officials need PreK-8 parents to read and sign the following Emergency Medical and Medical Information release forms on this page for this school year.

Emergency Medical Release

In emergency situations, such as an accident or illness complications, school officials need to contact a physician or the hospital in cases when a parent or guardian cannot be reached in a timely fashion. This release will allow school officials to make that contact.

I, the parent or guardian of Student _____

Grade ____ at Building _____ give permission for school officials to obtain the services of a physician or a hospital in an emergency when we, the parents, cannot be reached.

_____ _____
Signature Date

Medical Information Release

On your child's registration information, we ask parents to list allergies, special health problems or special medications concerning your student. With your permission, we release this information to your child's teachers. This release will allow school officials to release your child's medical information to authorized school personnel.

I, the parent or guardian of Student _____

Grade _____ at Building _____ give permission for the release of my child's medical information to authorized [redacted] personnel.

_____ _____
Signature Date

Parental Acknowledgment Reply Release Form

Upon the receipt of the student handbook, by signing the release, I, being the parent or guardian of a pupil in the [redacted] hereby acknowledge that I have/will review and understand the policies and information, as well as the annual notices, contained in this [redacted] I also acknowledge that I have/will review and understand the discipline and attendance policies herein.

My signature below acknowledges that I have/will review and understand the handbook discipline and attendance policies, as well as the other policies from the [redacted]

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Release For Field Trips - Permission For Instruction Outside Regular School Buildings

By signing the release, I, being the father, mother, or guardian of a pupil in the [redacted] hereby consent that my child may visit institutions, stores, and factories for educational purposes under the direction and guidance of teachers and chaperons of the said schools, and be transported to and from the school in school buses or chartered buses, and do hereby waive any liability on the part of the school corporation and agree to hold said school corporation free of all claims of every character and description by reason of instructional and educational information imparted to my child by reason of such visit/s. This waiver is given in consideration of such instruction outside of regular school buildings.

My signature below acknowledges that I have reviewed and agree to the Release for Field Trips from the [redacted]

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Publicity Photo and Information Release

By signing the release, I, being the parent or guardian of a pupil in the [redacted] hereby give my permission to the [redacted] to use my child's photograph or likeness (whether still, motion, or television), as well as educational information such as, but not limited to, honor roll, perfect attendance or scholarships, for newspaper articles, professional magazines, or any media for school publicity.

My signature below acknowledges that I have reviewed and agree to the Publicity Photo and Information Release from the [redacted]

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Internet Photo and Information Release

[redacted] maintains a corporation website [redacted] featuring each of the individual schools, as well as district news and information pages. By signing the release, I, being the parent or guardian of a pupil in the [redacted], hereby give my permission to the [redacted] to use my child's photograph or likeness, as well as educational information such as, but not limited to, honor roll, perfect attendance or scholarships, on the school corporation's website, which will be accessible via the Internet.

My signature below acknowledges that I have reviewed and agree to the Internet Release from the [redacted].

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

September 29, 2008

Dear Parents,

This year your first grader has the opportunity to participate in an exciting program. Every other Tuesday we will be traveling by school bus to [redacted] to read with 7th and 8th graders. Your child will be matched with a middle school student who will help him or her practice reading and writing. We will be at [redacted] for about an hour every other week.

Mrs. Joy Dewing, an 8th grade teacher at [redacted], has organized this program as part of a research study on adolescent readers through the University of Sussex. Although the data she is collecting is mainly about the middle school students and their work, as part of the project she will be looking at your child's work, working with your child, and observing your child. No personal information about your child will be shared.

If you choose for your child to not participate in the Buddy Reading Program at any time during the year, he or she will remain with another teacher at [redacted] Elementary and complete a different reading activity at this time.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at [redacted] or
Mrs. Dewing at [redacted]

Sincerely,

Mrs. Q[redacted]

My child, _____ may/ may not travel to [redacted] every other Tuesday to participate in the Buddy Reading Program. I understand that I may remove my child from the program at any time with no school consequences.

Pictures may/ may not be taken of my child.

_____ _____

Parent/ Guardian Signature Date

[This sign up sheet and informed consent was part of the Mentor Training Session. Mentors each received a copy of the consent information as part of the Training Session]

Mentor Reading Program
Volunteer Sign Up

I agree to meet with a middle student 2-3 times per month throughout this school year. As part of our meeting I will complete notes in a journal. I understand that my notes, including quotes, may be used for research purposes for Joy Dewing's research study through the University of Sussex. I understand that my name and any personal or identifying information will not be shared.

Name & Signature	e-mail address	Phone number	address	Best time of day (circle one)
				am pm
				am pm
				am pm
				am pm
				am pm
				am pm
				am pm
				am pm
				am pm

Appendix D: Likert Scale, Survey, and Interview Questions

Survey 1: October

Name _____ Grade _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____ Parent Name(s) _____

Class Schedule:

Class	Teacher
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

Reading Survey

1. What is the earliest book you remember someone reading to you?

2. Who read it to you?

3. What are 3-4 of your favorite books?

4. Who are some of your favorite authors?

5. When I think about reading, I think …..

6. When I have to read in class, I ….

7. I like reading when….

8. Reading is hard when…

9. Reading is easy when…

Likert Scale: October

Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____

Rate each statement by circling the word that best represents you.

1. I like reading.

strongly disagree — disagree — neutral — agree — strongly agree

2. Reading is hard for me.

strongly disagree — disagree — neutral — agree — strongly agree

3. I have trouble finding books I like.

strongly disagree — disagree — neutral — agree — strongly agree

4. If I have the choice between reading a book and watching TV, I usually choose TV.

strongly disagree — disagree — neutral — agree — strongly agree

5. I am not a very good reader.

strongly disagree — disagree — neutral — agree — strongly agree

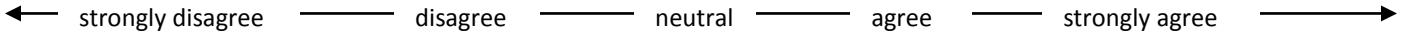
6. I enjoy choosing my own books to read.

strongly disagree — disagree — neutral — agree — strongly agree

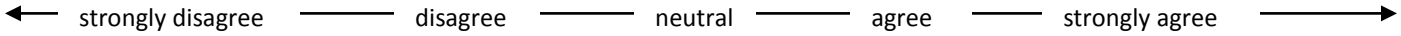
7. I prefer it when someone else selects a book for me.

strongly disagree — disagree — neutral — agree — strongly agree

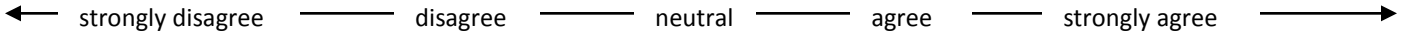
8. I don't like SSR days.



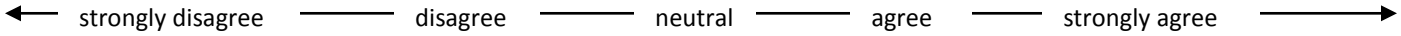
9. Reading is one of my favorite activities.



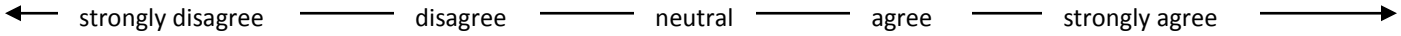
10. I like reading aloud better than reading to myself.



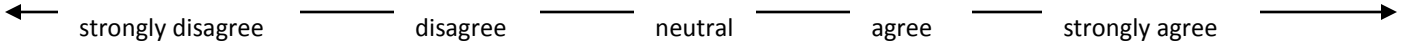
11. I often discuss books I'm reading with my parents or with friends.



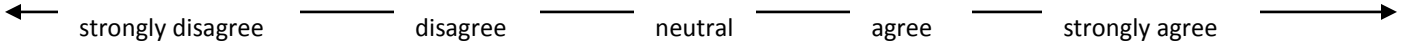
12. I like reading nonfiction more than fiction.



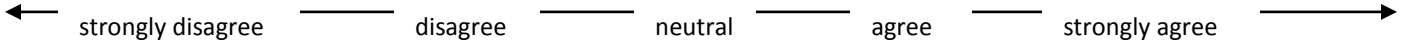
13. I like reading fiction more than reading comics or graphic novels.



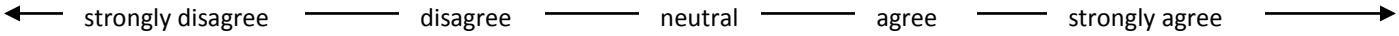
14. I read better than most of my friends.



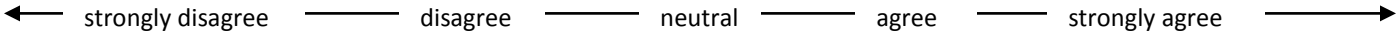
15. I own some books of my own.



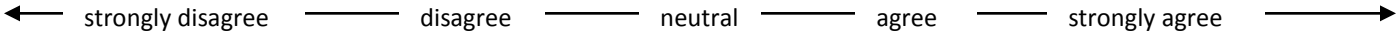
16. My teachers help me to read better.



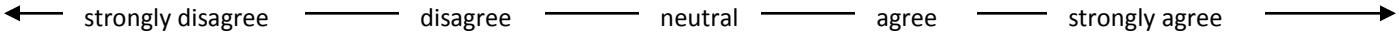
17. It is important to my parents that I can read well.



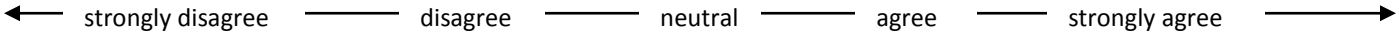
18. Reading is not important to my future.



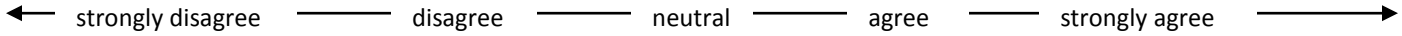
19. I like reading magazines more than reading books.



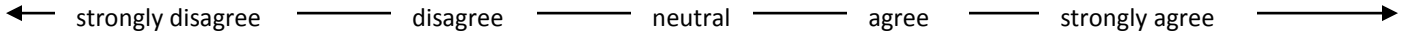
20. Many of my teachers have books in their classrooms.



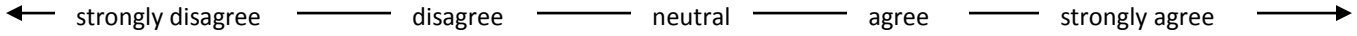
21. I do not get to visit the library very often.



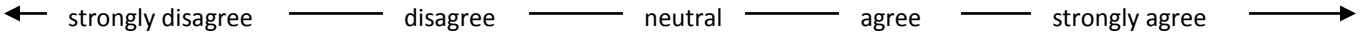
22. When I want to read a book, I know where to find one.



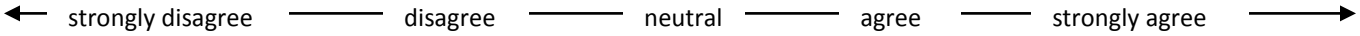
23. I read something every day in my classes.



24. My teachers don't think that reading is important.



25. People who read a lot do better in school.



Survey 2: January
Name_____ Date _____

1. What is a book you've read this school year that you enjoyed?

2. What did you like about it?

3. What has gone well as you've worked with your first grade buddy?

4. What is something you've learned from working with your first grade buddy?

5. What is something you do well as a reader?

6. What is something you've learned about reading this school year?

7. As you're reading, what do you think about?

8. A good reader is someone who ….

9. When I think about reading, I think …..

10. When I have to read in class, I ….

11. I like reading when….

12. Reading is hard when…

13. Reading is easy when…

14. What is something you've enjoyed when working with your adult mentor? (If you haven't met with your mentor in a long time, what is something you hope to do with them this semester?)

Interview: End of the Year
Name:

Date:

1. Tell me your earliest memories of reading.

2. What do you remember about learning to read?

3. Do you feel like your reading has gotten better this school year? Explain in what ways.

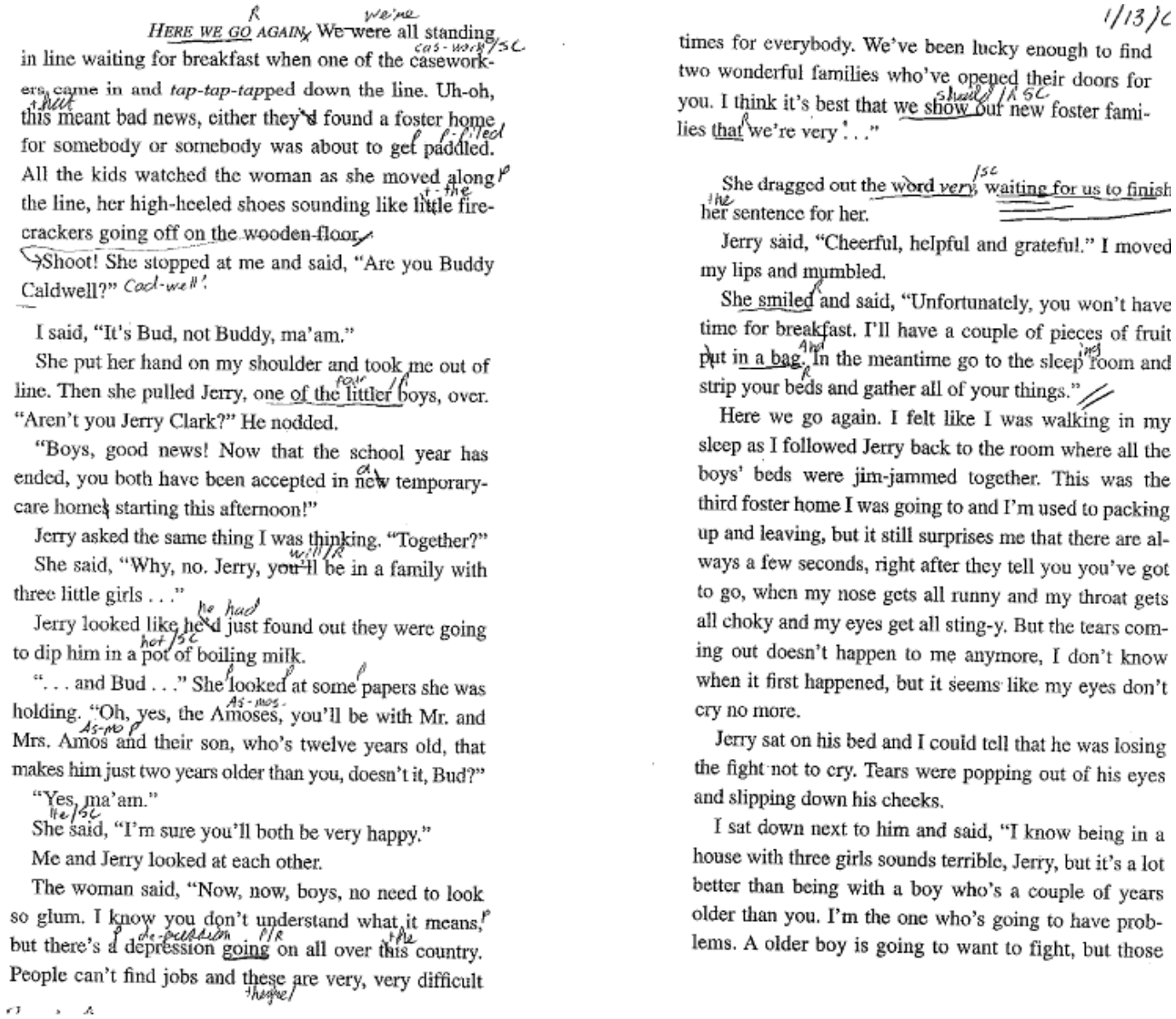
4. How has the Buddy Reading Program helped you?

5. What could I do differently to make the Buddy Reading Program better next year?

6. (7^{th} grade only) Would you like to participate next school year?

7. What else would you like to tell me about the Buddy Reading Program?

Appendix E: Takeelah's Miscue Analysis and Reading of a Text



HERE WE GO AGAIN. We were all standing in line waiting for breakfast when one of the caseworkers came in and *tap-tap-tapped* down the line. Uh-oh, this meant bad news, either they'd found a foster home for somebody or somebody was about to get paddled. All the kids watched the woman as she moved along the line, her high-heeled shoes sounding like little firecrackers going off on the wooden floor.

Shoot! She stopped at me and said, "Are you Buddy Caldwell?"

I said, "It's Bud, not Buddy, ma'am."

She put her hand on my shoulder and took me out of line. Then she pulled Jerry, one of the littler boys, over. "Aren't you Jerry Clark?" He nodded.

"Boys, good news! Now that the school year has ended, you both have been accepted in new temporary-care homes starting this afternoon!"

Jerry asked the same thing I was thinking. "Together?"

She said, "Why, no. Jerry, you'll be in a family with three little girls . . ."

Jerry looked like he'd just found out they were going to dip him in a pot of boiling milk.

". . . and Bud . . ." She looked at some papers she was holding. "Oh, yes, the Amoses, you'll be with Mr. and Mrs. Amos and their son, who's twelve years old, that makes him just two years older than you, doesn't it, Bud?"

"Yes, ma'am."

She said, "I'm sure you'll both be very happy."

Me and Jerry looked at each other.

The woman said, "Now, now, boys, no need to look so glum. I know you don't understand what it means, but there's a depression going on all over this country. People can't find jobs and these are very, very difficult times for everybody. We've been lucky enough to find two wonderful families who've opened their doors for you. I think it's best that we show our new foster families that we're very . . ."

She dragged out the word *very*, waiting for us to finish her sentence for her.

Jerry said, "Cheerful, helpful and grateful." I moved my lips and mumbled.

She smiled and said, "Unfortunately, you won't have time for breakfast. I'll have a couple of pieces of fruit put in a bag. In the meantime go to the sleep room and strip your beds and gather all of your things."

Here we go again. I felt like I was walking in my sleep as I followed Jerry back to the room where all the boys' beds were jim-jammed together. This was the third foster home I was going to and I'm used to packing up and leaving, but it still surprises me that there are always a few seconds, right after they tell you you've got to go, when my nose gets all runny and my throat gets all choky and my eyes get all sting-y. But the tears coming out doesn't happen to me anymore, I don't know when it first happened, but it seems like my eyes don't cry no more.

Jerry sat on his bed and I could tell that he was losing the fight not to cry. Tears were popping out of his eyes and slipping down his cheeks.

I sat down next to him and said, "I know being in a house with three girls sounds terrible, Jerry, but it's a lot better than being with a boy who's a couple of years older than you. I'm the one who's going to have problems. A older boy is going to want to fight, but those

Takeelah's Reading of the text would have sounded like this:

Here we go Here we go again we're all standing in line waiting for breakfast when one of the cas-workers caseworkers came in and tap-tap-tapped down the line. Uh oh, that meant bad news, either they found a foster home for somebody or somebody was about to get… p – piled. All the kids watched the woman as she moved along… the line her high-heeled shoes sounding like t-the fire crackers going off on the wooden floor shoot!

She stopped at me and said, "Are you Buddy Cad-well."

I said, "It's Bud, Not Buddy ma'am."

She put her hand on my shoulder and pulled me out of line. Then she pulled Jerry, one of the four littler one of the four littler boys over. "Aren't you Jerry Clark?" He nodded.

"Boys, good news. Now that the school year has ended you both have been accepted in a temporary care home starting this afternoon."

Jerry asked the same thing I was thinking. "Together?"

She said, "Why no, Jerry will will be in a home with three little girls…"

Jerry looked like he had just found out they were going to dip him in a hot, pot of boiling milk.

"And Bud…" she… looked… at some… papers she was holding. "Oh yes, the As-mos, you'll be with Mr. and Mrs. As-mo …and their son who's twelve year old, that makes him just two years older than you, doesn't it Bud?"

"Yes, ma'am"

He She said, "I'm sure you'll both be very happy."

Me and Jerry looked at each other.

"Now, now boys, no need to look so glum. I know you don't understand what it means… but there's a … de-press-ion going going on all over the country. People can't find jobs and they're are very very difficult times for everybody. We've been luck enough to find two wonderful families who've opened their doors for you. I think it's best that we should should we show our new foster families … that that we're very"

She dragged out the very the word very waiting for us to finish waiting waiting for waiting for us to finish the sentence for her.

Jerry said, "Cheerful, helpful, and grateful." I moved my lips and mumbled.

She smiled she smiled and said, "Unfortunately you won't have time for breakfast. I'll have a couple of pieces of fruit in a bag in a bag and in the meantime go to the sleeping room and strip your beds beds and gather all of your things.

Appendix F: Miscue Analysis Data Charts

Table 12F: Miscus Analysis - January, 2009

Student	Title of piece	Text Grade level	# of words read	Reading rate (wpm)	Error ratio/ running words	Accuracy rate in %	Syntax (S) Acceptable?		Semantics (M) Acceptable?		Meaning Change?			Graphic (V) Similarity			Self - correction ratio & type			
							Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Partial	Yes, major	High	Some	none	Ratio	S	M	V
Jasmine	Bud, Not Buddy	7	375	98	17/375	95%	0	3	10	7	12	3	2	7	1	5	4/17	2	1	1
Takeelah	Bud, Not Buddy	7	416	106	22/380	94%	0	8	14	8	8	5	9	7	5	5	5/22	1	3	1
Tonya	Seedfolks	4	289	127	12/289	95%	2	8	5	5	3	4	3	4	3	3	2/12	0	1	1
Chanteria	Bud, Not Buddy	7	375	107	11/375	97%	4	6	7	3	5	4	1	7	2	1	1/11	0	0	1
Corey	Bud, Not Buddy	7	416	166	6/380	98%	2	1	1	2	1	0	2	1	1	1	3/6	0	3	0
Madalyn	Bud, Not Buddy	7	375	159	7/375	98%	1	2	5	2	3	1	0	2	0	2	3/7	1	0	2
Trent	Seed folks	4	289	130	11/289	96%	9	2	6	4	5	1	4	3	3	4	1/11			1
Shawn	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	139	24/339	93%	8	10	9	9	8	3	7	7	1	10	6/24	1	2	3

Stephanie	Bud, Not Buddy	7	380	155	13/380	96%	5	5	4	6	2	2	6	3	5	2	3/13	1	2	0
Tierney	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	158	7/339	98%	2	2	1	3	0	2	2	2	1	1	3/7	1	0	2
Kinsey	Shiloh	5	384	184	12/384	96%	2	5	2	5	1	2	4	2	3	2	5/12	1	0	4
Savannah	Shiloh	5	258	128	6/258	97%	4	1	3	2	3	1	1	0	3	2	1/6	0	0	1
Kelsey	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	130	20/339	94%	7	3	5	5	2	3	5	4	4	2	10/20	2	3	5
Tabby	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	88	19/339	94%	7	2	5	3	2	3	3	0	3	5	11/19	2	2	7
Kynzee	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	132	17/339	94%	7	3	4	6	4	2	4	5	1	4	7/17	2	3	2

Table 13F: Miscue Analysis - May, 2009

Student	Title of piece	Text Grade level	# of words read	Reading Rate (wpm)	Error ratio/ running words	Accuracy rate in %	Syntax (S) Acceptable?		Semantics (M) Acceptable?		Meaning Change?			Graphic (V) Similarity			Self - correction ratio & type			
							Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Partial	Yes, major	High	Some	none	Ratio	S	M	V
Jasmine	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	108	20/339	94%	5	6	6	5	6	1	4	4	2	5	9/20	4	0	5
Takeelah	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	138	16/339	95%	7	2	7	2	6	2	1	0	5	4	7/16	1	3	3
Tonya	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	133	12/339	96%	4	2	3	3	2	1	3	5	0	1	6/12	2	0	4
Chanteria	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	104	15/339	95%	7	1	5	3	4	1	3	5	1	2	7/15	1	0	6
Corey	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	170	4/339	98%	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3/ 4	1	1	1
Madalyn	Bud, Not Buddy	7	380	157	14/380	96%	3	2	4	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	9/14	1	3	5
Trent	Seedfolks	4	319	144	8/319	97%	2	4	2	4	2	1	3	3	1	2	2/8	1	1	0
Shawn	Bud, Not Buddy	7	380	188	21/380	94%	9	6	7	8	4	8	3	7	3	5	6/21	1	2	3

Stephanie	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	175	11/339	96%	7	3	4	6	2	3	5	3	6	1	1/11	0	0	1
Tierney	Bud, Not Buddy	7	242	171	6/242	97%	1	3	1	3	0	2	2	1	1	2	2/6	0	0	2
Kinsey	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	190	7/339	98%	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	1	1	3/7	0	1	2
Savannah	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	138	15/339	95%	5	3	4	5	4	1	3	2	2	4	7/15	2	1	4
Kelsey	Bud, not Buddy	7	339	134	14/339	95%	5	4	4	5	4	2	3	3	3	3	5/14	1	2	2
Tabby	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	102	11/339	96%	6	2	6	2	2	5	1	3	3	2	3/11	0	1	2
Kynzee	Bud, Not Buddy	7	339	126	16/339	95%	4	4	5	3	3	2	3	4	3	1	8/16	1	1	6

Appendix G: Individual Student Vignettes

Twilight made the Difference: Tabby

Tabby was a 7th grader. At the beginning of the year she said she did not like reading and thinking about reading makes her tired. She also said she had trouble finding books she liked. In 5th and 6th grade her STAR Reading scores ranged between a 2.6 and a 4.9 grade equivalent. She had not ever passed the ISTEP test. She was not recommended for the Buddy Reading Programme by a teacher, but rather by the principal who had known her as a 6th grader. In addition, he placed Tabby in my enrichment period, which served mainly as a study hall. Although the period was for 8th grade, he wanted Tabby to receive additional reading help during the year.

When I observed Tabby working with her buddy the first few weeks, things seemed to be going well. She read aloud books that he enjoyed, including A House for a Hermit Crab. But Tabby did not complete her weekly record sheets several weeks in a row. I reminded her to do this and during enrichment period took a few minutes one day to review it with her. Tabby was eager to make recordings of books. She was one of the first students to record her three books, and she took the time to redo the recordings as necessary to make sure they were accurate. Her recordings were among the best ones completed. In one of my letters to her, I wrote,

> *Thanks for completing your recordings of the three books you chose. You did a good job adding expression, and I know that the buddies are going to enjoy checking out the books.*

By January Tabby's sessions with her buddy were going consistently well and although not always complete, she was doing a better job completing her record sheets. She worked with her buddy on unknown words and they used foam letters to form the words. Tabby also recorded the unknown words on the "Words I'm Learning" chart in her buddy's folder. I praised her for

the improvement, *"I see that there are some words on the Words I'm Leaning chart. Good. Keep working with these words until he knows them, and then let him move them to the Words I Know side."*

During enrichment period, Tabby began reading regularly. She read the Twilight series and many other books she borrowed from my classroom library. I was pleased to see that she had begun reading more. However, she did not complete her reading survey in January. I reminded her about it and gave her an extra copy, but she would not complete it and gave no explanation for this.

Tabby's work with her buddy beginning in mid-February was inconsistent. Some weeks they worked together well and Tabby was attentive to him:

> *I noticed that you and Alex moved to another table. This was good. There's so much space in the room that you shouldn't sit where it's crowded or where you'll be distracted.*

They both read aloud and then did hands on activities including word building, using magnetic or foam letters, or Twist-a-Word. Other weeks, Tabby sat near friends and was distracted by them, rather than focused on her buddy:

> *When you're working with A, I think you may need to move away from other pairs. The two of you sometimes get distracted by other groups, and I know you want to give him your full attention.*

One week in my observation notes, I wrote, *"Tabby moved to another table. Good!... She used the book to come up with words for A to spell with the foam letters."* But the next week I wrote, *"Pay attention to A, not your friends!"*

I began to see the same inconsistency during enrichment class. Some days she read or worked on homework assignments. Other days she wanted only to argue or sleep. Several of her teachers told me she was not completing assignments for class and she was failing all of her

classes. They reported a very negative attitude from her during their classes. Several of her teachers wanted to remove her from the Buddy Reading Programme because she was not completing her missed assignments. Most of her teachers had given up on getting Tabby to complete any work. They did not think she should have the privilege of working with younger students. But the purpose of the programme was to improve students' reading, not give them a privilege. When I began to try to get Tabby to do her missed assignments during enrichment, I saw the same negative attitude from her and she became very difficult to work with. I wanted to keep her in the Buddy Reading Programme because, although inconsistent, I saw a gentler side of her come out when she worked with her buddy. Although I was not completely satisfied with her record sheets, she usually did work nicely with her buddy and I saw some progress being made. Instead of allowing her to read, I used the enrichment period to try to get her focused back on her assignments for her classes. I had many phone and e-mail conversations with her mother, but received little support from home.

With her adult mentor, Mr. C, Tabby read and comprehended most texts. Mr. C noted that her reading was *"choppy"* and that she did *"not always pause at punctuation"*. He also noticed that Tabby, *"puts her own words in place of other words. If it doesn't make sense, she will stop and reread."* He also noted that she used little expression when she read. They chose to read the book Hoot by Carl Hiaasan together. As they discussed it each week, Tabby comprehended the plot with little trouble, but continued to use little expression in her reading. However, when reading aloud to her buddy, Tabby did add expression. I noted, "*It may be she's realized that it's important to read with expression to young children, but hasn't tried to do the same for herself."*

By mid-February working with Tabby was extremely difficult – both in enrichment class and when she worked with her mentor. For several weeks, any time Mr. C discussed a book with her or asked her a question, she replied, "*I don't know*". During enrichment she refused to do anything other than read Twilight. Although I was happy to see her reading and discussing Twilight with her friends before school –activities she was not interested in earlier in the year - she seemed to use books to escape reality and refused to do anything else. In an attempt to both allow and encourage her to read and to help her complete her assignments, during enrichment I allowed her to read Twilight the last fifteen minutes of class if she worked on assignments for the first 30 minutes. However, most days she put her head down and refused to do anything.

Mr. C had similar results.

> *The session started out sort of rough... Finally I [asked her to try] to convince me to start reading the Twilight series. This was also like pulling teeth... She just doesn't seem to be motivated about a whole lot, except for reading Twilight.*

They met in my classroom because I had few students that period and space for them to work uninterrupted. Several times he had to coax her into picking up her head so they could meet at all. When she finally agreed to work with him, her responses were apathetic. One time she told him that she was too tired to choose a book to read.

> *Tabby was extremely uncooperative today... We ended up taking a walk and picking out a new book to read together... Even getting her to pick a book was quite a chore. Finally I narrowed it down to a few and she chose one. I asked her what was going on and she said she was tired. I feel it is more than that though.*

I agreed that there were other issues going on with Tabby. She was unwilling to talk to me, so I followed school procedures and referred her to the school social worker. However, I later learned that her mother had refused to sign the paperwork necessary to allow her to meet with the social worker.

Tabby met with Mr. C for the last time in mid-March. She had been so difficult to work with that after talking with her and later with her mentor, we agreed that there was little more he could do. For the remainder of the year he worked with another student.

Tabby's Miscue Analyses showed a slight improvement during the year. On a 7th grade level text, her accuracy rate improved from 94% to 96% moving the text from her instructional to independent level. In May, Tabby scored a grade equivalent of 8.5 on her STAR Reading test, likely as a result of her increased reading. However, by autumn of her 8th grade year, this had dropped to 5.1, lower than her lowest score the pervious year. This suggests that Tabby did not continue to read over the summer and did not maintain any gains she made the previous year. Although her 8th grade teachers told me that she read in class (to the exclusion of other activities). The drop in her score may also have been caused by her own apathy toward the test.

At the end of April, I interviewed Tabby about the Buddy Reading Programme. She said that her reading had gotten better this year because,

> *I don't know. I can read bigger, harder books than I could last year. Twilight books made the difference – because they have like a lot of big words and they're really descriptive so it's easy to picture them.*

She also reported that she enjoyed reading mysteries and would probably look for a mystery book when she finished reading the Twilight series. Although Tabby said that the Buddy Reading Programme and working with her mentor had not helped her reading at all, she did say the programme had helped her in another way.

> *Um… I guess it's helped me get some of my patience together because I'm not really a patient person… I lose my temper really easily when something bugs me. I'm better at holding my temper. I don't go off on as many people so much. … I don't know, actually. It just helped a lot.*

From my observations I noted that Tabby had increased her volume of reading and at the end of the year enjoyed reading. She was using reading strategies to aid her comprehension and determined the genre of books she liked. She was always looking for the next book to read. Through her participation in the Buddy Reading Programme, reading became an acceptable activity and one she could engage in socially. As Tabby said, for her Twilight did make the difference. She discussed this book with her friends, and beginning with this book, entered the reading club (Smith, 1992).

To my surprise, by the end of her 7th grade school year, Tabby raised her grades and passed all of her classes. Although this may be as a result of me working with her during enrichment period, it is likely not a direct result of her participation in the Buddy Reading Programme. Most likely, Tabby simply decided to pass her classes. Whether there was measurable improvement in her ability to hold her temper and stay out of trouble at school was beyond the scope of this study. Likewise, the extent to which her own attitude and the causes of the change in her attitude impacted her reading was beyond the scope of this study.

Chunking the Text Aids Comprehension: Kelsey

Kelsey was a very quiet 7th grader. She was the model student in that she did what was asked of her and never caused problems. Although she did anything that was asked of her, Kelsey typically did not take initiative and begin tasks on her own. She was unable to see what needed done and begin the task independently.

During the year the Buddy Reading Programme was implemented, she passed both the fall and spring ISTEP test. At the beginning of 5th grade, her STAR Reading grade equivalent was 2.7. By December of her 5th grade year, her score was 5.2 and remained between 5.0 and 5.8 through 5th, 6th and the beginning of 7th grades. By May of her 7th grade year, after she had

completed the Buddy Reading Programme, he STAR Reading grade equivalent had increased to 6.2. But by autumn of 8th grade, it had dropped to 4.7, suggesting that Kelsey had not read much over the summer following the programme. Early in the year, Kelsey read a 7th grade text with 94% accuracy when I conducted a Miscue Analysis. By the end of the year, her accuracy rate was 95% on a 7th grade level text, which was not a significant improvement. When she completed the first Miscue Analysis, Kelsey's retelling was very brief. She did not name any characters, and her reading was full of pauses and the repetition of phrases. This, combined with her low STAR Reading test scores, is likely the reason her teacher recommended her for the programme. In May, her retelling included the characters names. Her reading was more fluent and included expression.

At the beginning of the year Kelsey did not have a strong feeling toward reading. She listed favourite books as The Cay, which was required reading in her 6th grade English class and A Child Called It which her 6th grade teacher had read aloud to the class. She also mentioned the books Freaky Friday and A Little Princess. She said she had trouble finding books she liked on her own, and reading was "*okay if I have nothing else to do*".

During her first two meetings with her first grade buddy, D, Kelsey read aloud to him, had him read a book to her, worked on flash cards of high frequency words, rainbow writing, and they began making an ABC book. Kelsey and D were one of the only pairs of buddies to complete the ABC book. Kelsey allowed D to draw the pictures, write the letters, and write the words. Several of his words were misspelled, such as "baer" (bear), "camol" (camel), and "gaps" (grapes), indicating that Kelsey had allowed him to sound out the words and use inventive spelling in his ABC book. They used rainbow writing to practice the spelling of high

frequency words. Kelsey did a good job working with D and from the very beginning had him doing the work, rather than doing it for him, as many students wanted to do at first.

When D wrote, he usually wrote only one sentence. I gave Kelsey some suggestions to help him write more, such as asking him more questions about his drawing and his writing. By the middle of December, Kelsey noticed that D was able to read more words on his own. She continued to work with him on the words he did not know. Rainbow writing was one of his favorite activities. In February, Kelsey noticed that D could not retell what he had read. I responded,

> *I see that D needs to work on comprehension. This is one of the most important things in reading. If you don't know what you read, what's the point?... One way to work on comprehension is as you read to him, stop every few pages and have him retell you what he remembers. Then, when he reads to you, do the same thing. Do you remember how when you read for me a few weeks ago, I had you retell what you remembered? This works for all ages. Try this and let me know how it goes.*

She tried this and soon noticed an improvement. Both her realization that D was having this problem and her ability to help him improve demonstrated that Kelsey understood that making meaning is important to reading. Kelsey continued to work with D on writing and spelling words he struggled with, decoding, and comprehension. On her record sheets, she clearly explained anything she was having trouble helping D with. She willingly took my suggestions each week and tried them with D the following week.

In January, Kelsey listed Diary of a Wimpy Kid as a book she had read recently and enjoyed. Although this book is on a lower reading level, it was a popular book this school year and many students read it. Kelsey liked it because it was funny. However, in general she said that reading was boring. She knew that she needed to find the right book, but admitted that she usually only read if she was bored.

Kelsey had only five meetings with a mentor during the school year. She met with a mentor, Mrs. B, twice in autumn before Mrs. B got a new job and had to stop coming in. During her first session, Kelsey told Mrs. B she most wanted help with comprehension. She also said she enjoyed reading about animals and adventure books. Interestingly, none of the books Kelsey said were her favourites are about animals, and only one could be considered an adventure. Mrs. B also noticed that Kelsey read aloud very quickly and ignored the punctuation. This type of reading affects comprehension in a negative way.

I was unable to find another mentor for Kelsey until March when Mrs. L volunteered. Like Mrs. B, Mrs. L immediately noticed that Kelsey read too fast. Together they chose the book Tiger Eye by Judy Blume. As they read together, Mrs. L stopped periodically to ask Kelsey to retell what she had read and see if she remembered it. The following week they read several newspaper articles about proposed changes to the school calendar and Kelsey formed opinions based on the information in the articles. *"She likes [the idea of] no [parent] conferences, but not extending the school year!" Mrs. L noted.* They continued reading Tiger Eye together, and Kelsey read some of it on her own outside of school. Kelsey finished the book and used it for a book report in her English class.

At the end of the year, Kelsey reported that she enjoyed reading as a result of the Buddy Reading Programme even though she had never liked it before. *"Cause like I used to not and now I read now. I read when I'm bored,"* she explained. She said that the Buddy Reading Programme had helped her during the year because

> *it just helps me understand and want to read. [It] helps with comprehension. 'Cause like [my mentor] asks me questions about [the book] and stuff. While I'm reading she like stops me and asks me questions and it just helps me.*

Kelsey went on to say that when she read on her own she now read in chunks to make sure she understood what she had read. What was interesting is that comprehension was something that Kelsey worked on with her buddy and something her mentor worked on with her. This demonstrates the reciprocal nature of the Buddy Reading Programme. Kelsey internalized this strategy because she used it repeatedly. This suggests that students need to be taught reading strategies and then be given multiple opportunities to use them; the strategies need to be reinforced regularly.

Her retellings improved as demonstrated by the Miscue Analysis and her addition of character names, and her comprehension improved slightly as demonstrated by her STAR Reading test in May. To what extent this improvement was retained is unclear. Her lower STAR Reading score in autumn of her 8th grade year may suggest that she did not read during the summer and that her progress from 7th grade may not have been maintained, but that is beyond the scope of this research study. It is likely that more one to one sessions with a mentor would have impacted Kelsey's reading positively, but again, there was no way to determine this definitively within this study.

Not Struggling, but Alliterate: Corey

Corey, an 8th grader, was a bit of an enigma. He was a tall football player, but very, very quiet. He was immediately likable, but hard to know well. Corey was in my 8th grade class the year I began the Buddy Reading Programme. I had not considered him for the programme initially. However, just before the programme began, his mother called me and asked if there was anything I could do to give him extra help in reading. She was concerned that she did not see him reading at home and as a result, many of his grades were low. I had noticed that Corey

was not very confident in his reading, so I decided to offer him a spot in the Buddy Reading Programme to find out if that made any difference for him.

Corey did not fit the profile of most of the students in the programme. He had easily passed both the fall and spring ISTEP test, and in fact, his scores were almost 100 points above the cut score. In 6th grade, his STAR Reading test scores were on grade level. In autumn of 7th grade, he scored a 9.6 grade equivalent and a 12.9+ grade equivalent at the end of the year. In the autumn of 8th grade when I met him, his grade equivalent on the test was 8.6, slightly above his grade level. By December his grade equivalent had increased to 12.9+, the highest score possible on the STAR Reading test, and he maintained that level throughout the school year. On his Miscue Analysis he read an appropriate grade level text with 99% accuracy both times I scored him.

Corey named a few favourite books early in the year: Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Storm Catcher and A Series of Unfortunate Events: Bad Beginnings. When the Buddy Reading Programme began in October, he said he pictured a movie in his head as he was reading, a strategy we had worked on in class. Corey said he liked reading and that it was not difficult for him. However this did not match what I observed in class or what his mother observed at home. When I gave students time to read in class, although he was very good at giving the illusion that he was reading, Corey usually did not read. Although he checked books out from the classroom library, he did not read at home or bring the books with him to class daily, both of which were class requirements. Most of the students who participated in the Buddy Reading Programme were struggling readers. Rather than being a struggling reader, Corey was what Jim Trelease (1995, 2006) calls alliterate: someone who is able to read but

chooses not to. I wondered if being a part of the programme would increase his desire to read on his own.

When Corey met with his first grade buddy, G, he worked nicely but was not too enthusiastic. I think he saw the programme as something his mom was making him do. The third time they were to meet, Corey was absent. G was very upset. The following session, Corey was late. When he walked in, G's eyes lit up and he was so excited to see Corey he could barely sit still. After that, Corey was not absent or late again. I think he was surprised to realize how much his buddy looked up to him. In January, Corey told me that he noticed G's reading improving and that he enjoyed working with him. The boys worked with foam letters, flash cards, magnetic letters, and Corey helped G with his writing.

In March I observed Corey and G working on a writing activity. G wasn't forming all of the letters correctly. Corey stopped and showed G how to make each letter and then helped him form it correctly. In my letter to him that week, I wrote,

> *When I walked by this week, I noticed you were helping Gavin form his letters correctly. You didn't just tell him how to do it, you worked to really help him and you were very patient. I was impressed.*

As the year went on, it became more and more obvious that Corey and G had developed a strong friendship. G started untucking his shirt, like Corey. He started walking like Corey. If Corey scratched his head, G scratched his head. If Corey yawned, G yawned too. But it was more than just G imitating Corey. One week, G hugged Corey when it was time for his class to leave and Corey hugged him back. The week that the first graders made macaroni necklaces, Corey willingly wore his necklace while he was working with G, but also wore it the rest of the school day! This was not something I would have expected a middle school boy to do.

In the middle of April a new first grade boy, T, moved into the class. I asked Corey to work with both G and T the last few weeks of the programme. Some of the students did not do well when they had a second student for a week and ended up ignoring one student and working mostly with the other, but Corey did not do this. He gave both T and G a chance to read aloud and involved both of them in the hands-on activities they did.

In January, Corey said one thing he had learned about reading during the school year was "*to read alot to get better*". He had added a new series, Artemis Fowl, to his list of favourite books and said he liked the suspense in the book. He also said he preferred to read at home rather than at school.

Corey had only five sessions with a mentor during the school year. I wanted to find a male mentor for him because I thought a male role model would be positive and would encourage him to read more than a female mentor might. His mentor, Mr. B, actually contacted me and asked to be a mentor when he learned of the programme. Mr. B met with Corey once in November and introduced him to the Artemis Fowl series. They worked on making predictions which is a reading strategy taught in class and one I encouraged the mentors to work on with their students. Although they only met once, it did have an impact on Corey because this became one of his favourite series. Mr. B remained enthusiastic about the programme, but his work schedule did not allow him to continue to meet with Corey.

In March, Corey began working with Mr. C after he stopped working with Tabby. Corey and Mr. C began reading a book Corey chose called <u>What Daddy Did</u>. The two quickly built trust and by their third meeting, Corey opened up to Mr. C, who wrote in his journal,

> *Corey and I talked some about what was going on in his life. Apparently he got into a fight last week and was in trouble at home.*

Although I had asked him about his black eye a few days earlier, he would not tell me anything. He was more willing to open up to his male mentor, which seemed to support my earlier assumption that same-gender pairings would be the most effective. Corey

> *got really into* What Daddy Did*, and finished it over spring break... He said he figured out that he likes drama and suspense, so I told him to make sure when he got the choice of what book [to read], he picks one he thinks he will like.*

Mr. C wrote. He and Mr. C looked for more suspenseful books to read together and discussed books Corey could read over the summer.

When I interviewed Corey at the end of the school year, he told me he thought his reading had improved

> *'cause I know all the reading strategies now and can put them into use. Going back, like making predictions, [and] going back if I don't understand anything.*

He said the Buddy Reading Programme

> *taught me how to be really patient with people. 'Cause …um… at the beginning G, he would have problems with some of the words and I'd have to tell him once or twice and now he doesn't need my help at all*.

Corey's only suggestion for improving the programme was to have more time to work with the first grade buddies.

At the end of the school year, Corey had read a total of eight books. Although he said this was more than he had ever read in a school year, most of his classmates in my English class had read between 15 and 22 books during the school year. While I know that working briefly with Mr. B and then with Mr. C, Corey read two of the eight books, it is unclear how many of the remaining six books he read as a result of working with his mentors. One interesting point, of the five specific book titles that Corey mentioned reading during the year, three were part of a

series. This supports Smith and Wilhelm's (2002) research suggesting that boys tend to like series of books. Smith and Wilhelm (2002) also suggest that many boys avoid reading because it is seen as a female activity. Corey's work with his mentors may suggest that the mentors had a positive effect on Corey's reading for pleasure, and that a male reading role model may have encouraged him to read more than he would have without a mentor. Likewise, when Corey realized that he was a role model for G, he began putting more energy into his work with his buddy. It is very possible that if he had met with a mentor more regularly throughout the entire school year that he would have read even more books.

I Stumble Because I'm Just Reading: Jasmine

Jasmine was an 8th grader who was well-known in the school for her volatile temper. When I met her in autumn, she frequently involved herself into situations that did not concern her, and as a result, was often in fights and in trouble. In class although I saw this demeanour, I also saw another side of her. She frequently volunteered to read in front of her peers, even through her reading was weak and disfluent. She was eager to volunteer for tasks to help her teachers in some way, such as passing out supplies or staying after class to help clean up. But she did not complete her assignments regularly and what she did complete was often inaccurate. However, she surprised all of her teachers by passing both the fall and spring ISTEP tests. Like many students, her STAR Reading scores were inconsistent. In 6th grade she tested at a 5th grade reading level. In 7th grade she tested at a 5.5 grade equivalent in autumn and a 7.2 grade equivalent in May. She was absent and missed the December test. In 8th grade, Jasmine tested at a grade equivalent of 9.1, 6.6, and 7.3. Based on her autumn STAR Reading scores, Jasmine would not seem to be a struggling reader, but because she was in my class and I had heard her read and talk about texts, I believed she was a good candidate for the programme.

Jasmine's scores illustrate the problem with relying only on test scores when working with students. Test scores can vary based on how the student is feeling on a given day, background knowledge that the student possesses, the difficulty of the test, a student's effort, and sometimes simply on luck. They are not always the best indicator of knowledge. It is not uncommon for middle school students to guess test answers without reading the selection or the questions. Guessing answers is something that Jasmine admitted doing if she didn't feel like taking the test. Test scores alone do not give a whole picture of a student.

When Jasmine read aloud to me for a Miscue Analysis, although her reading was mumbled rather than fluent, she read a 7th grade level text with 95% accuracy. When asked to retell what she had read, however, Jasmine said, "*Bud and Jerry they was accepted to temporary care homes, and yeah. Bud, he wasn't really happy about it.*" Although her statement was accurate, she left out much of the text. She stated that she was an "*ok reader"* and went on to explain, "*when I read aloud I stumble, but I know the words. [I stumble] because I'm just reading."* In other words, Jasmine's goal was to decode accurately and quickly when she read aloud so she did not fully attend to the text or the meaning. When focusing on just the words, and not the meaning, she was more likely to make errors. She went on to explain that when she reads in class she tried "*to read fast and I mess up the words*".

Early in the year Jasmine said she did not really like reading and sometimes had trouble finding books she liked. One book she liked was The Face on the Milk Carton which was a book that a teacher had read aloud in class. She said her favourite books were Number the Stars and Hatchet which are both at about a 5th grade reading level and are often read in 5th grade classrooms. Many of the struggling readers I have had in class can name favourite books from elementary school but have not found favourites in middle school. This may suggest that

elementary teachers are more effective at helping students find books they like than middle school teachers, or that there simply is less time set aside for pleasure reading in middle school.

Jasmine's work with her first grade buddy got off to a rocky start. During the first six buddy meetings, Jasmine was absent 3 times, and because of first graders' absences, she worked with 3 different partners the days she was at school. In mid-December, Jasmine began working with E. They read to each other, but Jasmine's record sheets were pretty sketchy and I had a hard time figuring out exactly what she had done during the session. Jasmine did say that E had trouble figuring out many words in the text. I suggested that she

> *be sure to write down words he's struggling with so you know what ones to work on with him. One way to figure out what words to work on is to use the flash cards. Then, the words he doesn't know yet can go on the "words I'm learning" side of the folder. You can work on these words using rainbow writing or the magnetic letters.*

I also suggested helping him find a book that was a little bit easier so that he would have more success reading. But she was absent again before she could try these activities with E.

By then it was mid-January. Jasmine spent the entire session reading aloud to E. Although I am a strong proponent of reading aloud, I expected the students to complete several activities during their time together. We were half way through the school year and I felt that Jasmine had not made much progress in the programme so far because of the inconsistency in her attendance and partner. I reviewed the variety of activities she could work on with her buddy and reminded her that she needed to do several different activities each week. The next time the first grade buddies met, E had moved. Jasmine worked with F, whose regular buddy was absent that day. Jasmine read a Junie B. Jones book aloud to F, but again, her record sheet was mostly blank. In mid-February, a new student, M, moved in to the first grade class. I matched him with Jasmine. Happily, M was at school the rest of the year and Jasmine did not miss any more buddy days. The first time Jasmine met with M, she read aloud to him. I watched her and noticed that

she was pointing to the words as she read to him, and she stopped periodically and pointed to and talked about the pictures with him. This demonstrated a change in her thinking about texts, as I had never noticed Jasmine connect the text and pictures before. However, she still did not complete anything other than reading aloud to her buddy in the allotted 30 minutes.

Jasmine continued to point out illustrations as she worked with M. One week I noticed her talking to him about the cover before she ever opened the book to read. Based on the title and the picture they made predictions about what might happen in the book. This was a strategy that we had worked in buddy training and in class throughout the school year. Even though I did not see Jasmine working on the variety of activities I would have liked, she was transferring instruction to what she was doing with her buddy and to her own reading. One time when I talked to Jasmine outside of class and asked how the Buddy Reading Programme was going for her she told me she knew she was becoming a better reader because of it.

> *I teach my buddy strategies like predicting. Or when he doesn't know a word I teach him a strategy like breaking it into parts so he can figure it out. When I read, I use those same strategies and it helps my reading get better.*

Not only was Jasmine internalizing reading strategies, she was also able to articulate what she was doing. This was quite an accomplishment, as Jasmine often did not communicate clearly. She also explained that she had learned that reading was "*fun when you actually do it*".

I saw some other gains in Jasmine's work during second semester. In January she said that her favourite book was The Car, a suspenseful book that was closer to a middle school level than books she had listed as favourites at the beginning of the year. She also said that she was visualizing what she was reading, a strategy we had worked on. At the beginning of the year she said reading is hard when "*I don't know what I'm reading*". In January she described reading as hard when "*I can't make out a picture in my head*". Earlier in the year Jasmine did not have any

strategies to help herself. On her January survey she shared a specific strategy – visualizing – that she used to help herself comprehend. In January she also recognized that comprehension is the purpose of reading, and wrote that a good reader is someone who "*can understand what they are reading"*.

Jasmine met with her mentor, Mrs. G, only four times during the school year: once in October, twice in March, and once in April. Mrs. G was a former English teacher. I paired her with Jasmine specifically because I thought she would be well suited to help Jasmine's reading skills and help hook her on books. Her mentor's work schedule, however, made it difficult for her to meet more often, and although between October and March she promised to work with Jasmine regularly she did not follow through. During their first meeting in October, they began reading the book Lawn Boy by Gary Paulsen. Mrs. G encouraged Jasmine to predict what would happen next. Jasmine named specific characters who she thought were funny. Mrs. G wrote, *"she seemed to enjoy the book and was eager to keep reading it; [she] thought the parents and grandmother were funny"*.

When they met in March, Mrs. G noticed that Jasmine's reading had improved.

> *She was very upbeat and excited to read. She said reading was a little bit easier for her... She had some difficulty pronouncing words, but tried several times with success.*

Even though they had not met for five months, Jasmine was willing to work with Mrs. G. She especially thrived on the one to one attention and instruction. Mrs. G also noticed that when Jasmine stumbled over a word, she stopped and worked it out before going on. This illustrated what Jasmine had told me about using for herself the strategies she was teaching her buddy. I had seen similar improvements in Jasmine's reading in class.

A month later at the end of April, Mrs. G met with Jasmine for the last time. She noticed a marked improvement in Jasmine's reading behaviour. In her journal, Mrs. H wrote,

> *Jasmine seems very relaxed about reading. She eagerly talked about her reading experiences over Spring Break. She said she was reading a book and was sad when it was over because it was so good… She seems to think in-depth about the story and imagines herself in the character's place. She has good predictive thoughts and often will predict what might happen next. She seems a little more confident with her reading.*

At the end of the school year when I interviewed Jasmine about the Buddy Reading Programme she discussed learning to read in elementary school. When she was in first and second grade she liked reading Green Eggs and Ham and read it "*like a million times*". When she entered 4th grade, however, the reading became more difficult. She explained that she had not read in the summer and she thought that "*slowed down [my reading] a little*". Jasmine said she knew her reading had gotten better during the year

> *because I'm understanding books better. Because I can tell some of what I had read in the book and like what happens and all the stuff. Like the main idea of the book.*

Jasmine's reading did improve during the school year. She became more fluent and used strategies to figure out words and to aid her own comprehension. She became a much more avid reader. In December, when the 8th grade teachers began making a list of students to be considered for retention, Jasmine's name was on the list. By the end of the year, her reading had improved and she was not retained in 8th grade. Although I would like to believe that the Buddy Reading Programme specifically made the difference in Jasmine's reading skills, I do not believe that is entirely the case. The Buddy Reading Programme did help her gain confidence as she worked with a younger student. As she taught decoding strategies to her buddies, she internalized the process and learned to articulate what she was doing. However, many of the strategies she used to aid her comprehension, such as visualizing and predicting were strategies that she was taught and practiced regularly in English class. Her avid reading and ability to find books she liked were developed and cultivated in English class. It is possible, however, that

without participating in the Buddy Reading Programme her progress would have been less drastic.

The Importance of Attitude: Madalyn

Madalyn was an attractive and popular 8th grader. At the beginning of the year, Madalyn listed Dr. Seuss as her favourite author, and said her favourite books were Green Eggs and Ham, Rachel's Tears, and A Child Called It. When talking about reading, Madalyn described it as reading aloud in class. She said reading in class made her nervous, but was easier when "*people are actually listening to you*". She said she had trouble finding books she liked on her own. School was a struggle for her and she was frequently in trouble for being disrespectful to teachers or getting into arguments with other students in the hallways. During the year, her teachers reported that she often had a negative attitude in class. But this attitude disappeared when she worked with her first grade buddy, K. When they worked together, Madalyn was kind and patient.

Much of what I know about her work with K was from observing her. She completed her record sheets only about half the time, and when they were complete they often did not make sense. During first semester, Madalyn and K read, but did few other activities. Although I asked Madalyn to work on flash cards and writing with him, she did not do either of these activities.

In January, they discovered a book called Rattlesnake Dance, which Madalyn read aloud to him. The book describes how to do the rattlesnake dance. Madalyn and K stood up and acted out the motions from the book. Because I had seen Madalyn outside of class and had heard what her teachers and peers said about her behaviour, I was shocked that she would do something silly when she worked with her buddy, so I encouraged her,

> *I was so impressed when the two of you read Rattlesnake Dance and then actually did the dance. When you did this you taught Kaden that you can read to learn to do things or to*

> *get instructions and that reading is fun! That was great! I bet he will remember that for a long time! I can tell that the two of you really had fun reading.*

She was also teaching K that reading can be fun. Rattlesnake Dance became K's favourite book and he chose it several weeks in a row.

During second semester Madalyn did not use her record sheet most weeks, so I made a point to observe her work with K and respond to what I observed, rather than her written record. I noticed that although Madalyn spent almost all of her time reading and very little writing or doing word activities, she did some good things as they read together. When K missed a word, Madalyn had him reread it to make sure that it made sense. When he reading the work "poking" instead of "poke" Madalyn isolated the word and had him look at the ending. When he noticed that there was no "ing" ending, he corrected his error.

The last week that the students read together, Madalyn and K paired up with another set of buddies and read a nonfiction book on spiders that the first grade boys had requested. After reading, the girls asked their buddies questions to see if they could remember any facts. The boys, of course, liked the gross facts they learned about spiders.

Although Madalyn did not complete the variety of activities with K as I would have liked, I did see a side of her that her teachers did not have the opportunity to see. Working with her buddy, Madalyn was kind, patient, and smiled a lot.

Madalyn had only two meetings with her mentor, Mrs. B, in the autumn, and I was unable to find another mentor to work with her. When they met, they selected the book Monster to read together. Mrs. B noticed that Madalyn "*reads fast without voice; does not stop at punctuation"*. During their second meeting, Mrs. B used two children's books to model fluent reading with expression.

In January, Madalyn reported that during the school year she had read and enjoyed the book Monster by Walter Dean Meyers. Even though she and her mentor did not finish it together, Madalyn finished it on her own, and although she only had two meetings with her mentor, the sessions impacted her reading choices and behaviours. Madalyn said she had learned to read more slowly so she could understand a book. She had come to see reading as not just reading aloud in class, but also as something she did independently; she learned that she preferred to read on her own. When reading aloud, Madalyn worked on reading with expression.

When I talked to Madalyn at the end of the year she admitted that learning to read had been difficult and reading had always been a struggle for her. She said, though, that her reading had gotten better this school year

> *'cause usually if I didn't understand a words I would just skip over it and just use the words after it to understand. Now I sounds out the words, and find out what they mean and how to say it right*.

She said that the Buddy Reading Programme "*helped me interact with children in the right way… like be patient with them. They're not going to learn it right then and there. It takes time.*" She also said the Buddy Reading Programme had helped her learn new words.

> *K would pick out books with hard words… I never knew that a child book could have a hard word in it or something that I didn't understand and we'd talk about it and he'd understand and it would make me understand too*.

Madalyn did not pass either the fall or spring ISTEP Test in 8th grade. In 6th and 7th grades, Madalyn's STAR Reading grade equivalent was between 3.5 and 4.6. At the beginning of 8th grade her STAR Reading grade equivalent was 5.5, 6.0 in December, and 5.4 in May after completing the Buddy Reading Programme. On her first Miscue Analysis, Madalyn read a 7th grade level text with 98% accuracy, however her retelling was inaccurate. She had a few details correct, but misunderstood parts of the text. At the end of the school year she read the same text

with 96% accuracy, and she self-corrected 9 of the 14 errors. Her retelling was accurate and much more complete than earlier in the year.

Although Madalyn's reading improved during the year, she continued to struggle in her classes. That, combined with the fact that she had not passed the state mandated standardized test, led to her retention in 8th grade. She started the year well, but unfortunately within a few weeks, she became very angry and was determined not to work for her teachers. When she took the STAR Reading test in autumn, she scored a 5.4 grade equivalent. This was lower than it had been in autumn of the previous year. It is unclear whether Madalyn scored poorly because she had a difficult time with the test or because she decided to not try her best on it.

During the autumn of Madalyn's second year in 8th grade I offered two different book clubs for 8th graders which met during their enrichment period. Madalyn decided to participate in both of them. She knew several of the students in the book club because they had participated in the Buddy Reading Programme the previous year. The social component of the book clubs was important. During the first book club she participated and discussed the book with the other students, and she helped choose the title for the second book club. I was pleased to see that she had chosen to read and was excited about books. Unfortunately about half way through the second book club she decided to drop out of it. This seemed to coincide with the decline of her attitude in class.

It is unclear whether more one to one time with a mentor would have made more difference for Madalyn. When working one to one with her first grade buddy, Madalyn worked hard and helped her buddy make progress even though she did not do all of the activities I would have liked to see her do. Her own reading skills did progress during the programme. It is likely

that she would have worked hard and made even more improvement with a regular mentor. It also seems that Madalyn's own attitude toward activities made a difference in her achievement.

The Importance of Mentors: Savannah

Savannah was a 7th grade girl who was very quiet and polite and had a positive attitude towards school. Early in the year she said she liked reading and that it was easy if she understood the book. She listed her favourite books as Just Listen, Copycat, and A Little Princess. Savannah said that she liked choosing her own books to read but did not have a strong feeling on whether finding books she liked was easy or difficult. Although she said she did not get to visit the library very often, she had books of her own at home.

On her first Miscue Analysis she read a 5th grade level (Shiloh) text with 97% accuracy. However her reading was very slow and deliberate. When she retold what she had read she picked out a few details but missed the gist of the piece. I also noticed that Savannah made some basic errors in her writing such as "*He is boing* {doing} *well"* and "*We wrote a later* {letter}". She also mixed up 'then' and 'than'. Savannah passed the English/ language arts portion of both the fall and spring ISTEP test, although her spring score was only a few points above the cut score, making her a "bubble kid". Her STAR Reading tests from 5th through 7th grades showed a range of a 5.2 to 6.6 grade equivalent. Although not the lowest reader, she was recommended for the Buddy Reading Programme because of her slow reading and her weak comprehension.

Savannah worked well with her first grade buddy, T. When I suggested she try an activity such as rainbow writing or using magnetic letters to work on "-ing" she used the suggestion the following week. *"Savannah and T did a nice job with magnetic letters today"* I noted in February. Savannah's buddy was a reluctant reader and early in the year she asked,

"How can I get him to read when I ask him to?" One week, in a written conversation he insisted that he did not like reading.

> T: *Wate do you like to do*
> S: *I like to swim and read.*
> T: *I like to swim to but [not] reading*
> S: *Reading is fun.*
> T: *No it ant*
> S: *I think it is fun*
> T: *tats silly*
> S: *Not when you get older you will always read*
> T: *No I wot*
> S: *Yes you will.*
> T: *I told you no I will not*
> S: *Ok then, but you will*
> T: *No No!*

When I responded to Savannah that week, I wrote,

> *In the note you and T wrote back and forth, I noticed that he was arguing with you about reading. Did you have trouble getting him to read today? … I find it usually isn't worthwhile to argue with kids. Instead I usually just change the subject. One thing we want to teach him is that reading is fun, not a chore. … When you were reading aloud to him, I noticed that he was really paying attention, so that was a good thing.*

As the year progressed, he became more willing to read to her. The photos clearly showed that Savannah and her buddy worked together well, and that he was attentive when she read aloud to him. She was attentive to him as they were doing activities and as he was reading aloud. Although she was always willing to take suggestions, Savannah often seemed unsure about what to do next with her buddy. Throughout the year she needed suggestions of what to do next, and she never seemed to internalize the activities available.

Savannah met with her adult mentor, Mrs. W 19 times during the school year. During the first few sessions, Savannah read aloud very quickly, but then was unable to remember what she had read. I noted to Mrs. W,

> *Some students think fast = good. They concentrate so hard on reading quickly that they have no clue what they've read.*

Teaching these students to pace their reading to the text is a challenge. Savannah also skipped over words she did not know. Her mentor worked to get her to slow down and read all of the words correctly. In November they read the book Abduction , which her friend Stephanie was also reading. Savannah was engaged in the book and finished it in two weeks, then chose another book by the same author. Mrs. W noted that she *"wanted to continue to read the same books as friends"*. In December, Mrs. W commented that, *"her expression was great... Savannah did skip words once in a while, but would catch herself and correct"*.

Savannah continued to choose books to read with her mentor. Sometimes she abandoned the book part way through, but more often she finished reading the books quickly. In January she was reading two different books for different purposes. She read one book for enjoyment and the other for a research paper. She was able to distinguish between the purposes of these texts in order to read more than one book at a time. This demonstrated growth in her reading behaviour. By mid-February, Savannah's mentor noticed that she was reading with more expression. They read aloud a children's book, and Mrs. W wrote, *"I thought Savannah did a great job reading out loud and is improving...with expression and reading slower"*. Reading children's books to the first grade buddies encouraged many of the students to begin reading with more expression because they could decode the words easily and were able to think about expression and meaning. They also learned that their buddies expected an expressive reading and quickly lost interest if the reading was not expressive.

By the end of March, Savannah had read all of the books in the Twilight series. Several of her friends were reading these books and the girls discussed them. Earlier in the year Savannah said she never discussed books with friends or adults. Sharing books with her friends

demonstrates maturation in her reading and an entrance into the reading club (Smith, 1992). After finishing the Twilight series, Savannah chose a book a friend recommended, called Ninety Minutes in Heaven. Savannah said one of the things she enjoyed most about working with her mentor was finding different books to read. During their last session together, Savannah and her mentor talked about using the public library during the summer so Savannah could continue reading.

Throughout the year, Savannah wrote summaries of what she was reading for her mentor. Early in the year Mrs. W asked questions to try to expand her thinking. As a result, later in the year, Savannah's summaries were more complete. Below are two summaries Savannah wrote during the year. The first summary was written on October 14:

> *I am currently reading a book called copy cat. It's about this guy he killed girls who are ten years old. He stopped for five years than started again: he is now calling one detective and say he isn't the one who killed the last girl. That's all I read so far*.

In the first summary, Savannah wrote the gist of the book. However, she did not mention any characters by name. She began with "*It's about this guy"* rather than just beginning her retelling. She ended with "*That's all I read so far"* rather than just ending the summary. She had several errors in conventions, such as a run on sentence, a then/ than error, and an error in capitalization. The following summary was written on March 26:

> *90 minutes in Heaven is about this guy name John. He was on his way home from a church meeting. They left the church earlier because of the weather. On his way home he was hit by a truck. The EMTs decleared him dead at the scean. He describes what heaven is like in this book.*

In this second summary, Savannah introduced the title and main character at the beginning of the summary. She explained the exposition and then the plot of the book. Savannah's sentence structure improved and she partially capitalized the title. It was evident that she attempted to

sound out unknown words. This suggests that practicing summarizing with her mentor and her mentor's questions helped improve Savannah's skills in summarizing and led to an increase in her comprehension. Later in the year, Savannah discussed literary elements such as point of view, which demonstrated more sophistication in her thinking about texts.

On her last Miscue Analysis for the year, Savannah read a 7th grade level text with 95% accuracy. She was able to retell what she had read accurately. At the end of the year, Savannah said she felt her reading had improved during the school year because,

> *I'm starting to read bigger books with harder words and I understand what they mean. (I'm reading the) Twilight series and I'm on Breaking Dawn.*

She also said she and her friends read the same books and discussed them sometimes. Savannah also said that the Buddy Reading Programme had helped her

> *a little. Cause it's starting to get me to read more to my little sister since she's only in Kindergarten. Used to she asked me to read to her and I wouldn't. But since reading to the 1st grader I'm starting to read to her more.*

Savannah's test scores did not show significant improvement during the school year. Her STAR Reading score declined from 6.3 to 5.7 during the summer between 7th and 8th grade, suggesting that she may not have read much during the summer following the Buddy Reading Programme. However, the improvement in her Miscue Analysis and in her ability to summarize may indicate some improvement as a result of the programme. Unlike many of the students in the Buddy Reading Programme, Savannah did not seem to improve her reading skills significantly through working with her first grade buddy. However, the work she did with her mentor, along with her mentor's consistency, seemed to lead to an increase in Savannah's comprehension of texts and in her desire to read and to share books with others.

Selective Comprehension and Personal Choice: Chanteria

My first interaction with Chanteria was when she was a 7th grader and I was dragging her off of another student with whom she was fighting. Another teacher had taken the other student, and it took all of our power to keep the girls separated. I did not know who she was at the time, and later saw little resemblance between the girl who was fighting in the hallway and the girl who worked with a shy, insecure first grader. Chanteria's 8th grade English teacher described her as a reluctant reader. At the beginning of the year Chanteria's responses were mixed between whether or not she liked to read, however most of her responses indicated that she did not like reading much. She did report three favourites: Monster, The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe, and the short story "The Tell-Tale Heart". Chanteria passed the fall ISTEP Test by earning the exact point value of the cut score, and passed the spring ISTEP Test by only 2 points. Her STAR Reading tests in 6th through 8th grades scored between a 3.2 grade equivalent and a 4.9 grade equivalent. But on her Miscue Analysis in autumn, Chanteria read with 97% accuracy on a seventh grade level text. Of the 11 miscues she made, she self-corrected one error. She retold only a few details, rather than the gist of the piece. At the end of the year she read with 95% accuracy on the same text; this time self-correcting 7 of the 15 errors. She told more of the details, but in an order that did not make sense. This was representative of Chanteria's work throughout the year that she participated in the Buddy Reading Programme – inconsistent and difficult to draw any conclusions from.

Like many students, one of Chanteria's first questions when working with her buddy was, "*how do I get her to concentrate on what we are doing?"* Chanteria and her buddy, J, were sitting behind the bookshelf with J sprawled out on the floor. Behind the bookcase seemed to be a bad spot for many pairs, as the younger children tended to be unfocused because they were not

easily seen. I suggested first moving to a different spot and then gave some other specific ideas for helping J to focus. Chanteria tried these ideas right away. Chanteria was the only middle school student to complete the student record sheet correctly the first time she met with her buddy, and she completed it consistently throughout the year. I often shared parts of her record sheet as I was teaching the other students how to complete the form. The following week Chanteria and J moved to a beanbag against the wall that was not behind the bookcase. This seemed to be a better spot, and they completed several different activities during the allotted time.

In January, Chanteria noted, *"She has held her pencil incorrectly all year her teacher tells her to hold it right"*. So she began to help J hold her pencil correctly. By mid-February it was clear that J really looked up to Chanteria. From photos it became obvious that J did not just sit next to her, she sat as close to Chanteria as she could get and often leaned her head on Chanteria's shoulder. It was obvious that J craved the individual attention. Although Chanteria did not admit it verbally, it was clear that she also liked the attention and having someone look up to her. Chanteria noticed that J was reading through sentences and ignoring the punctuation. Chanteria had her pause briefly at the end of each sentence to "read" the periods. Chanteria noticed when J was improving at *"remembering what happened in the book"*. I was pleased with Chanteria's ability to figure out what J needed next to support her learning. Her work with J was consistently strong.

Chanteria met with her reading mentor, Mrs. H fifteen times during Chanteria's enrichment period. Mrs. H was a retired reading teacher who had worked at WMS about seven years ago. When Chanteria first met with Mrs. H, she told Mrs. H she did not know why they

were meeting. However, her enrichment teacher told me how excited Chanteria had been to go to read with her mentor. I was puzzled by this seemingly inconsistent behaviour.

One activity Mrs. H worked on with Chanteria was having her write her own children's books. Mrs. H brought in examples of children's books to share the rhythm and use of illustrations. Each week that they met, Chanteria completed one page of her book. When it was finished, Mrs. H bound the book and gave it to Chanteria to share with her first grade buddy. Although Chanteria seemed pleased with the finished book, I never saw her share it with J.

In November and December Chanteria was reading Johnny Tremain for her English class. She told Mrs. H she did not understand any of it, and that the *"book is boring"*. So Mrs. H worked to help her understand it better. Chanteria mentioned that they were watching a DVD of the book in class. *As far as I can tell, Chanteria does not understand the story very well. Two weeks ago that had a DVD – she said she didn't remember anything."* In December, after her class had finished the book, Mrs. H *"asked about the Johnny Tremain test. [But she said] she didn't look at her grade."*

When Mrs. H *"discovered that she loves to play softball so I ordered three books for her. She read the first one today."* Chanteria read it aloud with very few errors and was able to retell what she had read. On several other occasions, Chanteria read well if she was interested in the topic. Mrs. H remained patient with Chanteria, but suggested that perhaps Chanteria was demonstrating "*learned helplessness*"

> *I told her ... that she is a good reader with vocabulary and comprehension. Her problem is she decided she doesn't like the subject, so dismisses it entirely. I told her that she's been trying to fool everybody into thinking she couldn't read; that she can read.*

Mrs. H, as a former teacher, was very familiar with this sort of attitude and was unwilling to allow Chanteria to "play games" with her, and suggested that Chanteria was *"Smart? But lazy?"*

She continued to work with Chanteria and supported her as a reader, but was no longer drawn in by Chanteria's claims to not understand most texts.

In mid-January I met with Chanteria, and shared with Mrs. H what she had said,

> *She told me her reading hasn't gotten any better this year because she doesn't read. She just pretends and she doesn't try to find [books] she likes.*

I was surprised with Chanteria's candour. But what she said supported the observations of Mrs. H and myself. I asked Mrs. H to focus on helping Chanteria find something she enjoyed reading.

Mrs. H continued to bring in softball books and cut out several articles on softball from the local newspaper. One book, Throwing Like a Girl, really piqued Chanteria's interest. She read three chapters in one week, which was great progress for her. The last time they met, Mrs. H gave Chanteria Throwing Like a Girl and another book called Sammy Keyes and the Sisters of Mercy, in which the protagonist is a softball player, to keep. Chanteria left Sammy Keyes in my classroom. I returned it to her the next time I saw her. However, during locker clean-out the last day of school, a teacher rescued the book from the trash can where she had seen Chanteria throw it, and gave it to me.

At the end of the year when I interviewed Chanteria, she was not very willing to talk to me. She told me that she had never liked to read but that her reading had gotten better this year "*cause I sounds out my words and stuff now*". When asked if the Buddy Reading Programme had helped her she replied, "*Uuuuhhh…* (looks at floor) *It actually helped me by working better with little kids. Like doing stuff with them and reading to them.*" Although she responded kindly to her elementary buddy and worked well with J, Chanteria made little connection to her mentor and although she said she knew how to improve her reading, chose not to. Chanteria's teachers reported that her friends and home life likely had an effect on her lack of progress in

school because academic achievement was not valued. They felt that she was smarter than what she demonstrated. Chanteria did benefit from the reciprocal nature of working with her first grade buddy, and was usually able to determine what skills she needed to work on with her buddy. However, Chanteria's own reading did not demonstrate any discernable improvement as a result of the Buddy Reading Programme, likely as a result of her own choices.

Finding a Favourite Genre: Kinsey

Kinsey was a 7th grade girl who was very quiet and smiled a lot. When I met Kinsey in the autumn she had a positive attitude towards reading and said she enjoyed it. Some of her favourite books included A Child Called It, and biographies of Anne Frank and Harry Houdini. She passed both the fall and spring ISTEP test. Her STAR Reading scores showed between 5th and 7th grade equivalent in reading level over the past three years, however, in the autumn before the Buddy Reading Programme began, she scored a 6.4 grade equivalent. Although this was low, it was not significantly low, so I was somewhat surprised that her English teacher had recommended her for the programme.

However when I listened to Kinsey read aloud I had a better understanding of her teacher's recommendation. She first read aloud a 5th grade level text for a Miscue Analysis. Although she read with 96% accuracy, her reading was very slow and she read word by word, rather than fluently. Rasinski (2000) suggested that slow, disfluent reading may be an indication of reading problems, and that teachers often perceive a slow reading rate as a lack of reading proficiency. This may have led to her teacher's recommendation. Kinsey retold the text accurately, but then told me her class had read the book and watched the movie in 5th grade. Because she was familiar with the text, she may have been able to tell it more accurately than a text she was unfamiliar with.

Kinsey worked well with her first grade buddy, A, from the first time they met. Kinsey followed the suggestions I gave her and was willing to try new things with her buddy. When A missed several high-frequency words, Kinsey used rainbow writing to help her learn them. Kinsey was one of the first students to use rainbow writing, which I had introduced to the students during the first training session.

By the middle of December, Kinsey had noticed that "*A is doing way better at paying attention to what she is reading"*. Kinsey also was attentive to which words A was still struggling with: *"She needs to keep working on the word 'way'"*. I responded by offering suggestions for working on this word.

> *Is [way] the only word from the flash cards that she didn't know? To work on it, I'd use the magnetic letters. Have her spell the word "way". Then have her change it to "day", "say", "bay", "jay", "lay", "may", etc. When she's got that down, you can use the same "-ay" sound and change it to "away", "stay", "play", etc. Help A understand that if she knows how to spell one word, she can change the beginning sounds to make new words. This is a good spelling strategy.*

When students know how to spell one word, they can use it to spell other words with the same spelling pattern or rime. Kinsey tried this activity during the following session, and it seemed to be successful. Kinsey was consistent in her work with A. She took the suggestions I offered and built upon A's knowledge and skills each time they met. Kinsey was willing to work with a second first grader a few weeks when some of the middle school students were absent, but noted that *"it is difficult for A to learn when she has someone else with her*". She told me that working with the buddies was *"a lot of fun"*. Kinsey was very easy to work with throughout the year.

In January, Kinsey said that something she had learned during the year was to always pick books she liked. As I trained the students to work with their buddies, I taught them the importance of helping their buddy find books the buddy liked when they chose books to read together. Kinsey took this concept and transferred it to her own reading. Another concept she

transferred to her own reading from working with her buddy was to reread if she misread something. Besides talking to the students about having their buddies reread a sentence they had read incorrectly, this was something I modelled in my read alouds at each session. Kinsey learned from the modelling and reciprocally taught it to her buddy.

Kinsey met with an adult mentor a total of six times during the school year. Her first mentor came to one session in October. Then the family moved across town and her mentor did not return. I struggled to find a replacement mentor, until I paired her with Mrs. M in mid-April. Mrs. M met with her weekly through late May, and continued to meet with her even after we had finished working with the first graders. Although Kinsey did not have a mentor for most of the year, she did begin discussing books with her friends. She joined the group of girls who read the entire Twilight series during second semester. The desire to read these books, as well as the challenge from her friends, encouraged her to read outside of school. When she met with Mrs. M for the first time, she wrote, *"I found out she had read all four of the Twilight series of books on her own... I asked her what kind of books she likes and she said 'scary'."*

Then they began reading the book Flush together. Mrs. M noticed that Kinsey *"could slow down a bit and read with a bit more expression"*. They spent all five sessions together reading Flush. Mrs. M made sure Kinsey had a copy of the book to take with her each week, but Kinsey rarely read more than a few pages of the book on her own. Although she said she enjoyed the book and wanted to keep reading it, she read most of it only while working one to one with Mrs. M. This may be because the book was not one Kinsey would have chosen on her own. Although Kinsey mentioned several biographies at the beginning of the year, she said her favourite genres included mystery and scary books. This preference may have developed from reading Twilight with her friends. The fact that Kinsey read the Twilight series with her friends

may also suggest that reading was a social activity for Kinsey. When reading the same book as her peers, she was motivated to read on her own. Although she was willing to read Flush with Mrs. M during their sessions together, she was not as motivated to read on her own when she had not selected the book.

At the end of the school year, Kinsey's STAR Reading score was at a 7.7 grade equivalent. This score, although 2 months below her actual grade equivalent, was considered reading "on level". On her final Miscue Analysis, she demonstrated reading with 98% accuracy on a 7th grade level text. Kinsey did feel that her reading had improved during the year, but did not specifically attribute this improvement to the Buddy Reading Programme.

> *I think it's helped them. Alyssa. Like when we first started out she didn't really pay attention to what she was reading. She just tried to get through. I told her to pay attention like to the words and slow down and that seemed to help her.*

Kinsey said she read more this year than she had in the past. "*Yesterday I got grounded and I was mad so I stayed in my room all day and read a whole book. It's called* Freak." She went on to summarize the book. She was likely motivated to read this book because, aside from being grounded, it was a genre that she enjoyed.

When Kinsey started 8th grade, her STAR Reading test grade equivalent had dropped to 6.3. This suggests that she did not read during the summer, perhaps because she had no one with whom she could discuss books. Kinsey did choose to join two book clubs offered during enrichment period in the autumn during which she read books and discussed them with others, and seemed to enjoy the interaction with peers. Again, this supports the idea that reading is a social activity for Kinsey. The social aspects of working with a first grade buddy and a mentor had a positive effect on her. Although she did not think she had specifically learned from the programme, she did use concepts taught during the training sessions with her buddy and in her

own reading. Perhaps if Kinsey had more sessions with an adult mentor her reading would have progressed even more and she would have selected and read more books she enjoyed.

Adjusting Reading Pace to the Task: Stephanie

Stephanie was a 7th grader who was very social. Several of her friends also participated in the Buddy Reading Programme. In general she said she liked to read and could find books she liked. Her two favourite books were The Napping House, which her grandma read to her when she was young, and Elves Don't Wear Hard Hats. She also enjoyed mysteries. However she did not like reading what she described as "*long books*".

Stephanie passed both the autumn and spring ISTEP test. Between 5th and 7th grades her STAR Reading test scores were between a 3.5 and 7.7 grade equivalent. Her scores varied significantly from test to test. Some years her scores fell over the summer and some years they improved, so it was difficult to draw conclusions based on her test scores alone. Her relatively high test scores in 7th grade were inconsistent with what her English teacher had seen in class, so she recommended Stephanie for the programme. On her Miscue Analysis, Stephanie read with 96% accuracy both times the analysis was conducted. The first time her summary was very brief – only one sentence. The second time her summary was slightly more detailed.

Stephanie began her first buddy meeting with J with a written conversation. This activity helped the students get to know each other a little bit and helped the middle school students to quickly determine which words the first grader needed to work on. The middle school student could also model correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation though this activity. One thing I noticed right away was that Stephanie did not punctuate her writing correctly, or sometimes not at all. I reminded her to use punctuation and to model this correctly for her buddy. Stephanie asked me to review rainbow writing with her. I was impressed that she asked for help with a

specific strategy, rather than simply asking me what to do next, as many other students did at first. After I reviewed rainbow writing, she began using it regularly with J as a way to work on spelling. However, Stephanie was not sure what words to work on. I suggested that she work with J on the high frequency word flash cards. These words gave her a starting place for words to work on with J.

> *I see that you worked on flash cards, … You can do rainbow writing or use the magnetic or foam letters to practice the words she doesn't know. The words on the flash cards are all ones she needs to know this year, so it's important for you to make sure that she does know them. If she doesn't know a word, have her write it on a post-it and put it on he "words I'm learning" side of her folder. Practice these words each week. When she knows it, she can move it to the "words I know side". This will help us see her progress during the year.*

Stephanie willingly accepted my suggestions for working with J.

When Stephanie worked with J she was very patient. She tried to help her and did not get upset at all. The girls worked together with few problems. One week I watched Stephanie help J choose a book to check out. J was having trouble deciding, but Stephanie worked with her patiently until they found one she thought J would like. Then Stephanie helped her check it out using the card system. Overall Stephanie's work with J was steady and methodical. There was nothing that stood out as significantly positive or negative.

One week Stephanie did not want to come to Buddy Reading because she had had a fight with a friend who was also in Buddy Reading. However, once she began working with J, the fight was forgotten and Stephanie seemed to enjoy her time with J.

At the end of the year, Stephanie said that the Buddy Reading Programme taught her to read to younger children. In addition to working with her buddy, during the year she began reading to her 3 and 6 year old cousins. *"I've learned like my cousins like me to read to them."*

Stephanie met with mentors 13 times. She met with one mentor once, but after that

mentor got a new job she was no longer able to come in. Stephanie was then reassigned to another mentor, Mrs. W, with whom she met with 12 times. When Stephanie read aloud, she read very quickly, which caused her to miss some of the words. Her mentor encouraged her to slow down and to go back and reread what she missed. Stephanie chose mysteries to read with her mentor. The first two books they read together were Abduction and Cages both by Peg Kehret. One of Stephanie's friends was reading these books at the same time. When she chose a new book to read, Mrs. W noted "*she would read the back of the book, and open the book and read"* a little bit before deciding on a book. These are strategies that good readers use when they are selecting books and ones that I taught students and encouraged the mentors to teach as well.

Stephanie's writing was weak. She often made convention errors, and included few details. *"I try to get Stephanie to read over her ...writing and correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation," Mrs. W wrote.* Even when she wrote many words, her content was weak. I offered some suggestions to work on Stephanie's writing

> *One thing I noticed about Stephanie's writing is that she isn't saying a whole lot. She makes general comments, but doesn't give any details. One way you could help her with this is by writing back and asking her questions. Questions are a good way to draw out ideas and encourage her to say more.... It also gives you the chance to model correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.*

Mrs. W did try using written conversations with Stephanie and saw some improvement. By March I noticed that Stephanie was beginning to add punctuation to her writing when she worked with Mrs. W. She often wrote summaries of her reading that demonstrated her comprehension of the text.

In January, I began focusing on reading with expression when I worked with the middle school students. As they recorded books for the elementary students, reading with expression was essential. Mrs. W noted that Stephanie *"did so much better slowing down"* as she read and

was beginning to add expression. It seemed as if the conversations I had with the middle school students were being reflected in Stephanie's own reading. By March, I noticed that Stephanie was beginning to add punctuation to her writing when she worked with Mrs. W. She often wrote summaries of her reading that demonstrated her comprehension of the text.

Stephanie joined the Twilight craze and worked her way through several of the books in the series, and discussed them with friends. She and her friends got into long debates about the books outside my classroom before school many mornings.

During the year, Stephanie and Mrs. W read more than eight books together. Mrs. W focused on getting Stephanie to slow down and read carefully throughout the year. I would have liked to see her move on to other reading strategies and I suggested several. But reading carefully was what Mrs. W felt most comfortable with. In spite of this, Stephanie did make some progress in her reading. Because she was thinking about slowing down, she read more carefully and was able to write stronger summaries. Stephanie said, "*[I learned] to slow down when I'm reading, and to go back and reread if I don't understand what I've read…I read harder books and I read faster or slower depending on the book.*" This showed that Stephanie learned to pace her reading based on the task. Her writing conventions also improved during the year. Stephanie said that working with her mentor encouraged her to read a lot at home, which she had not done in the past. Now "*someone's pushing me to keep reading. [It] has made school better.*" I was surprised to learn that working with a reading mentor had made school, in general, better for her. This may suggest that mentoring programmes affect students well beyond the mentoring session itself.

Because Stephanie's test scores were so inconsistent, no strong patterns were evident. At the end of 7th grade she scored a 5.8 grade equivalent, which was her lowest score of the year.

However, in the autumn when she entered 8th grade, she scored at a grade equivalent of 7.0. This suggests that Stephanie may have read during the summer. Whether a direct correlation can be made between this and the Buddy Reading Programme is unclear. However, it is clear that Stephanie gained confidence, discussed books with friends, and learned to adjust her reading pace to the task as a result of the programme – all characteristics of 'real readers'.

Reading Beyond the Text: Takeelah

Takeelah was in 8th grade during the Buddy Reading Programme. She was very tall and thin and had a warm smile that made her immediately likable. In class Takeelah was very compliant and did whatever was asked of her. She was willing to volunteer in class. On the surface, she did not seem to struggle with her reading skills, and in fact her reading, while not on grade level, was much better than many of her peers. However Takeelah's attendance at school was sporadic. She missed four of the nine STAR Reading tests that were administered while she was in middle school, including two of the three administered while she was in 8th grade. Takeelah was accepted into the Buddy Reading Programme at her mother's request, rather than by teacher recommendation.

At the beginning of the year, Takeelah listed Lemony Snickett as her favourite author. Her favourite books were The Slippery Slope and The Babysitters Club series. She also said that she enjoyed reading. All of her responses early in the year, except for two, indicated strong reading behaviours. The two areas for growth were that she made infrequent visits to the library and that she did not discuss books with friends or adults. However, later in the year she admitted that she really had not enjoyed reading previously. It is possible that Takeelah offered the responses she thought I wanted. At the beginning of the year she read a 7th grade text with 94% accuracy. Of the 22 miscues she made, Takeelah self-corrected 5 of them. Takeelah's retelling

of the text, although accurate, was very brief: *"Two little boys were in line. Bud and Jerry are going to a foster home."*

Takeelah enjoyed working with her first grade buddy, F. Although Takeelah was absent during three of the Buddy Sessions first semester, she did not miss any sessions second semester. She was eager to work with her buddy and was one of the first students to come in and record books for the first grade buddies to check out. F was a very strong reader and was reading Frog and Toad, an early chapter book, in December. He was fairly easy to work with and excited to read. In mid-January, Takeelah wrote,

> *Dear Mrs. Dewing, Reading Frog and toad is funny He Really likes them. They way we Read is I Read a page and He Reads a page. It kinda Funny. He Reads very well and He sounds out the words very well.*

This brief note demonstrated Takeelah's struggle with writing and sentence structure. In class she often wrote with no punctuation at all. This was something I encouraged her mentor to work on with her.

By February, F had progressed to reading The Magic Tree House series. Although Takeelah and F spent most of their time reading, they did do some hands-on activities. One week they used word puzzle pieces. F constructed the sentence, "*His baseball is orange*". I used this as a teaching moment for Takeelah.

> *When you and F were working on the puzzle, one thing I noticed was that he wrote the sentence "His baseball is orange". While this does work as a sentence, it doesn't really make sense, since we know that baseballs are white. It's important to teach him that his writing should make sense. So ask him, "Does that make sense?" "What would make more sense?" This is an easy way to help him revise his writing, and also to teach him that writing (and reading) should make sense.*

In March, as I observed Takeelah working with F, I noticed her working to make connections with him before they started reading the book. This is a reading strategy we had

worked on in English class throughout the school year. As they were reading together, Takeelah continued to encourage him to make connections to the text, ask questions, and make predictions. They were reading a book about Clifford, the Big Red Dog, at the circus and pointing out the problems that Clifford was causing. Telisha asked, *"Wouldn't you be kinda mad if you wanted to buy cotton candy and he sniffed it all up?" "Yeah,"F replied.* I was pleased to see that she had transferred this learning from class to teaching her buddy to think as he was reading.

The last time the buddies met, Takeelah and F read a nonfiction book about spiders. Using a ball of yarn, they worked with Madalyn and her buddy and created a spider web on a bulletin board and talked about how spiders make and use their webs. This was an idea that Takeelah came up with on her own, which showed me, as did her use of strategies, that she was thinking beyond the text.

Takeelah met with her adult mentor, Mrs. D, ten times during the school year. However, her mentor came in more than fifteen times to meet with her, but was unable to because either Takeelah was absent or had to make up tests from days she had been absent. While Takeelah's attendance did improve on days she was to meet with her first grade buddy during second semester, in general her attendance at school remained a problem.

During their first meeting together, Takeelah's mentor noticed that she moved her head close to the page as she was reading. I requested that the school nurse do a vision test to check Takeelah's eyesight. During second semester Takeelah got contacts and this seemed to help.

One thing Mrs. D noticed was that Takeelah often used context clues to figure out unknown words. This was one strategy that was taught during class. Takeelah and her mentor

had meaningful conversations about books. In February, Takeelah selected the book My Mother the Cheerleader.

> *Takeelah said she had started the book a few years ago, but hadn't finished it. She said reading it now, she is amazed at how much she missed the first time... She seems to have a good understanding of what is happening, coupled with the history of desegregation which is necessary to comprehend all that is going on in the book.*

Takeelah discussed the characters with Mrs. D as they read together. After finishing My Mother the Cheerleader, Takeelah moved on to The Uglies later in February. As she discussed it with Mrs. D she made comparisons to The Giver, which is a book all 7th graders read in English class. Takeelah's discussions with Mrs. D showed not only strong comprehension, but an ability to read beyond what is in the text to understand the deeper meanings.

In late April Takeelah selected a nonfiction book called The Forbidden Schoolhouse. As she discussed it with Mrs. D, Mrs. D reported,

> *she said she had to reread some of the book because she was a little confused by some of the details.... We compared/ discussed how this book related to some of the other Civil Rights books she's read.*

Takeelah's discussions with Mrs. D showed that she was transferring the reading strategies she was taught in class and during buddy training to her independent reading. Discussing books with someone seemed to benefit her as well.

Takeelah's writing improved during the year. In December as she was getting ready for final exams, Takeelah wrote:

> *It is getting time to take the last test and I am very glad. I think I will do very well on my Finals. We Have gotten study guides for afew classes So I think if I keep study whats on them I will bein good shape I understand what we are studying but when ever I think of the word test its like I cant think and I Just write stuff down. So this year I am workine extra Hard on every thing test and Study guides So I should do very well, I Hope.*

This writing sample shows that Takeelah paid little attention to capitalization and punctuation and the spelling of high frequency words early in the year. Mrs. D worked on some sort of writing activity with her, usually written conversations, each time they met. This extra one to one work improved Takeelah's writing basics. In mid-March her writing showed considerable improvements in conventions:

> *On Saturday I was so happy it was warm. I woke up and went to the park. My little brother wanted to go for a walk so me and my brother and mom went to the park. Around 2 we went to eat lunch with my grandfather. It was a Fun day and I am happy Spring is getting her sooner than later. I hope it stays this warm.*

At the end of the year, Takeelah reflected on the fact that learning to read had been a struggle for her. She expressed frustration that her sister who was fifteen months younger had learned to read before she had.

> *I remember like I would get certain words confused like "of" and "or". It was so hard. I thought they were like just the hardest words to pronounce. I remember my sister started reading a lot before me. She read a lot and really fast. She learned to read when she was really little. It made me so mad. She learned to do everything before me, so I wanted to learn to read before her but she beat out of that too.*

Takeelah said that now, however, she catches on to things before her younger sister does.

Takeelah reported that her reading had improved *a lot* during the year. Although she had said she liked reading at the beginning of the year, as she looked back, she admitted,

> *I didn't like to read at the beginning of the year. I thought it was dreadful. Now I read through a book in 2-3 days and then reread if I think I missed something. Before I read a book and was like "Ok, now I'm done" ...I think it's just reading more and reading books I like. Before I just picked up a book and now I find ones I think I'll like. I read* <u>The Watsons Go to Birmingham</u> *and I really liked that book, so I started picking more books like that. I liked them and got through them quicker so I started picking books like that.*

She said her favourite book was the

> *one I'm reading now,* The Voice that Challenged a Nation. *I started reading last night and couldn't stop. I'm almost to the end. It caught my attention and I just couldn't stop reading it.*

Most of the students in the programme talked about working with their buddy as making the most impact on them. Takeelah, however, explained that her mentor made the biggest impact.

> *I think the Buddy Reading Programme has … helped out my reading because [I'm] reading with someone else and when I read out loud she notices things like if I skip a word or read it wrong. She catches that. So when I read by myself I look back and make sure that I read it correctly.*

At the end of the year, Takeelah read a seventh grade level text with 95% accuracy, which indicated that the text was within her independent reading level. Of the 16 miscues she made, Takeelah self-corrected 7 of them. This is a significant improvement from the first Miscue Analysis. In addition, her summary of her reading was much stronger, more detailed, and more accurate. Takeelah was absent and missed the final STAR Reading test, so there is no quantitative test data to show whether her reading level improved significantly during the programme. However, from her writing samples and interviews it is clear that Takeelah benefitted from the one to one instruction she received as part of the programme.

I'm Proud of Me: Tierney

Tierney was a 7th grade girl with a big smile. When I meet her, I could not help but like her right away. When I met her early in the year, she said she liked to read sometimes but it was not an activity she would choose. She also said, "*I really don't read unless I get to read out loud*". Unfortunately, many classrooms still use round robin reading despite the research against this. Tierney was in an English class where this was the usual method of reading, which reinforced the idea that reading should always be done out loud and is a school activity.

Tierney passed her fall ISTEP by a few points, but did not pass the spring test. Between 5th and 7th grades, her STAR Reading scores showed a grade equivalent between 3.0 and 5.8. At the beginning of 7th grade, Tierney scored a 4.7 grade equivalent. By December of the year it had improved to 5.8. Tierney read aloud accurately – once with 97% accuracy and once with 98% percent accuracy, both on the same 7th grade level text. Early in the year she read quickly, while later in the year she read with more expression.

When Tierney worked with her first grade buddy, she quickly realized that they needed to sit in an area by themselves. Tierney said she needed help with *"getting her more active and talking!!"*. But by the second week working together A had started to open up a little more and Tierney wrote, *"She is getting better she's asking questions and talking to me, she's just shy"*. One of their favourite activities to do together was sentence building, in which the students have cards with words on them and arrange them into sentences. This activity was a fairly easy for A, who was a strong reader. I encouraged Tierney to push A to write more complex sentences or to compose her own sentences and paragraphs on paper. However, Tierney did not take this suggestion. By January, Tierney noticed that A did not need help reading the books she chose, and she felt proud of her buddy's accomplishment. "*I think she is going to be a good reader. I'm proud of me, and her. She is talking [more] and I had her tell me about the book I read to her.*"

In March a new student moved into the first grade class. Tierney offered to work with both A and the new student. Tierney decided to play a game that both of the girls could participate in. I had noticed that when many of the middle school students worked with more than one buddy for a day, one of the buddies was usually left out. That did not happen with Tierney; she made sure both were included in all of the activities. After that session, Tierney

wrote, "*I had 2 buddies today they did so well I'm proud. …I really wanted to work with them toda*y." She continued to work with two buddies for the rest of the school year saying, "*Mrs. Dewing, I love being able to work with two book buddies it seems that we are able to have more fun with two. Thank you."*

Before the end of the year, Tierney was working with three girls, including Kynzee's buddy. Although Kynzee sat at the table, she did not interact with the first graders the last few weeks and allowed Tierney to work with them.

In April Tierney noticed the improvement that her buddy had made during the year writing, "*A is doing great she has really improved since we first started. …She is ready to read bigger books. She was helping J and D on words they didn't know*."

The experience that Tierney had in the Buddy Reading Programme seemed significantly different from the experience she had in her English class and during the rest of her day at school. She reported in January that she had not read any books on her own all year. She still said she preferred to read aloud than to herself, and the Buddy Reading Programme gave her the opportunity to do just this. Her teachers did not report seeing the sweet girl that I saw when I watched Tierney working with her buddy, and she was suspended from school for her behaviour at least once during the school year. Tierney did not seem to like her classes either. When I asked her if she would like to continue in the Buddy Reading Programme in 8th grade she replied, "*Yeah, if I go here. [I] might go to [another school in town]. I don't like this school I don't get along with some of the teachers."*

Tierney's reading mentor, Mrs. A, was very inconsistent and came in only three times to work with her – in November, January, and March. During the first session they read <u>The Giver</u> together. This was an assigned book for Tierney's English class. When they met, Tierney was

on chapter 1 but was supposed to be on chapter 4. Tierney and her mentor read the book aloud together, beginning where Tierney had last stopped reading independently. Although her mentor planned to continue reading this book with Tierney, when she returned in January, the class had moved on. Tierney did not finish reading The Giver with her class. In January, I asked Mrs. A to take Tierney to the school library and help her find a book. Instead, they read a selection from the literature book on the Titanic. Although this selection was well-written and engaging, it was not enough to encourage Tierney to find something to read on her own. In March, the third time that Mrs. A came in, they read some poetry from the literature book that Tierney was reading in class. Again, I had asked her to take Tierney to the library. Instead, Mrs. A wrote, *"She has agreed to make sure she checks out a library book this week. Our/her goal is to read at least three books by the end of this grading period."* This was a great goal, but since Mrs. A did not come in again the rest of the year, Tierney was not motivated to work toward this goal.

I was disappointed in the mentoring that Tierney received. Yet these few sessions seemed to impact Tierney, who said she had improved,

> *not just reading but how I sound when I read. ..I usually just read plain but Miss A forced me to read like with sound and like you know what I mean. Like when there was an exclamation mark she made me read it like they would with like emotion and stuff… I wouldn't be able to read with expression without doing that because I met with Miss A.*

This suggests that even a small amount of attention from an adult mentor did have some positive effect.

Tierney worked well with her elementary buddies and helped them make progress. However, without her own consistent reading mentor and with very little personal motivation to read, Tierney made little progress in her own reading during the school year. Near the end of the year I asked Tierney about her own reading. She said she did not think reading was hard, "*but it*

is boring 'cause, I don't know, I just don't think it's fun. It's not something I want to do." She went on to explain,

> *[I] don't like reading to myself. … I started* Bud not Buddy *in ABC [the in-school detention room] when I got in trouble. In ABC [I] listened to the CD and the book. But another time when I was in ABC I couldn't remember where I left off at….[I] liked the CD, [because it is] easier to read.*

Throughout the year Tierney said she preferred to read aloud than silently and here she explained that reading while listening to a CD was easier for her. The recorded book allowed her to read the text without decoding unknown words and allowed her to focus on comprehension. Tierney may have benefitted more during the year if she had a combination of listening to recorded books and reading text and could have listened to her adult mentor read aloud to her. For Tierney, more positive interactions with adults throughout the school day would have helped. Tierney thrived when she was given the role of teaching someone else. Capitalizing on this strength in class, through the use of partner work and small group work might be a learning tool that would positively affect Tierney's education. She also may have benefitted from more social interactions in her classes. Tierney was not one of the girls who discussed books outside my classroom door, so she had few positive social interactions with adolescent books during the school year. This lack of social interaction, outside of working with first graders, may have prevented her from entering the reading club (Smith, 1992).

Tierney was absent the day her class took the STAR Reading test in May. However, when she took the test in the autumn of her 8th grade year, she scored a 6.1 grade equivalent. This was the highest score she had ever earned. However, Tierney's scores from the past three years were inconsistent from test to test, so it can not be said with certainty that her improved score was as a result of the Buddy Reading Programme or summer reading.

Almost Slipped Through the Cracks: Trent

Trent was an 8th grade boy who always smiled and was very compliant. When asked what his favourite books were he shared titles, including The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963; The Sign of the Beaver; Where the Red Fern Grows; and Diary of a Wimpy Kid. Early in the year he reported two favourite authors: Gary Paulsen and Jeff Kinney. Trent explained that when he reads, he thinks, "*I want to be inside of this book*". When reading aloud, Trent did not struggle to decode words and although he did not add much expression, his reading of the words was accurate. From an initial view, Trent did not seem to be a struggling reader. However, when I talked with him about a text, it became obvious that he did not comprehend what he read. When he completed reading comprehension tasks in class, his answers rarely made sense with the text.

The first time Trent met with his first grade buddy, M, they sat behind a bookshelf where they were not easily visible from the rest of the classroom. As a result, I missed watching their interaction the first week. Trent's record sheet with the activities the boys completed together was missing from the folder. So the following week I made a point to observe them. I wrote,

> *I can't figure [Trent] out! When I checked on him, he was drawing and his buddy was doing nothing! I was so annoyed with him! I asked his buddy to draw for me and write a story, which he was very eager to do. I can tell I'm going to need to keep an eye on Trent. He mumbles so much it's hard to figure out what's going on with him. [Another teacher] says he's just stubborn. I wonder, though, if he has a learning disability. When I talk to him, it's like talking to a brick wall. I'm not sure how to help this kid!*

For the next meeting, I wrote out step by step directions for Trent to follow as he worked with his buddy. Although Trent followed some of the directions, he did not do everything I asked of him. But it was a start. I asked him to begin showing me his record sheet before he left each week so we could go over it together.

Because Trent was struggling not only in the Buddy Reading Programme but also in all of his classes, his teachers met to discuss his progress in early November. Because his responses on assignments in my class often did not fit the task I brought up the suggestion of having Trent tested for special education services. In his other classes he was completing very little of the work and the other teachers agreed that he was simply stubborn. After the next Buddy meeting when again Trent wrote and drew while his buddy sat and did nothing, Trent did not complete anything except the date on his record sheet, and he left the room without letting me review it with him, I began to agree that maybe he was stubborn. So I tried to find ways to make sure M was getting the help he needed, for example I brought books and manipulatives directly to the boys, rather than waiting for Trent to get the supplies on his own.

My next step was to move them. I told Trent they were no longer allowed to sit behind the bookshelf and needed to be somewhere in the middle of the room where I could see them. The following week they did move from behind the shelf. However, I noticed that Trent was sitting in a chair and M was sitting on the floor. From this position, there was no way the boys could see what the other was reading. Interestingly, though, Trent thought the new seating arrangement was working well and said, "*since we have move from the Balk of the shelf, we have work harder*".

During the very first buddy meeting, in order to determine what letters the first grade students knew, all pairs worked on letter books together. Each pair had a small blank book. On each page the first grader wrote a capital and lower case and then drew a picture that began with that word and spelled it with the middle school student's help. For example A a apple; B b ball. This turned out to be a fairly easy task for the first graders and most pairs lost interest in it and had moved on by the second or third meeting. However, Trent and his buddy were still working

on this book at the end of January. I encouraged Trent to move on to writing activities with his buddy. But at the first meeting in February, they were still working on the alphabet book. The other major problem I noticed was that Trent still was not sitting next to his buddy. When I asked him to sit next to his buddy he replied, "*I am".* So I took a photo of Trent and his buddy. Trent was sitting on a bench. His buddy was sitting on a beanbag on the floor at the opposite end of the bench.

Extremely frustrated, that week I wrote in my field diary,

> *I don't know what to do with him. ... Today I actually told him to sit on the floor next to his buddy and he still didn't. Today they were the farthest apart I've ever seen them. ... Trent doesn't seem to know he's a struggling student. He doesn't seem to realize that he doesn't get it. Even in class. So does he realize that he isn't sitting next to his buddy?*

I was puzzled by Trent saying that he was sitting next to his buddy, when he clearly was not. In my letter to Trent that week, I inserted a copy of the picture and wrote,

> *[Something] I'm noticing that really concerns me is that you still are not sitting next to M. You need to be right next to him so both of you can see the words at the same time. Look at this picture from last time. Do you see how you're sitting above him and facing a different direction? There's no way you could see what he's working on. The two of you, at one point, were more than 5 feet away from each other. Please come down to his level. If M wants to sit on the floor, your job is to sit down on the floor next to him.*

In the mean time I shared the photo and my observations of Trent both in class and in the Buddy Reading Programme with a special education teacher and asked for advice. She suggested that Trent might have some sort of a spacial disorder and had not realized they were far apart. She suggested special education testing. I talked with Trent's other teachers and we began the paperwork process for testing.

Showing Trent the photo seemed to help some because at the next meeting I walked by to find Trent's buddy lying on the floor with a book over his face and Trent sitting near him. This

was some progress for Trent. But his buddy took some convincing to sit up and get to work. He had learned that he did not have to do what Trent asked him to do, and now that Trent was ready to work with him more effectively, M was accustomed to not working during this time. Trent was frustrated and on his weekly record sheet wrote,

> *I need you to talk to Mrs. Q about M's Actions He really don't want to Read that much, I have to try to get him to read But he to busy, playing or laying on the pillows being. lazy.*

I suggested that Trent try sitting at a table with his buddy, rather than on the floor. I also suggested that he tell his buddy after they read a book together they could play one of the games. So far, Trent and his buddy had not done any of the hands-on activities available.

At their next meeting, Trent and his buddy did sit at a table, and things seemed to go much better. I noticed that when Trent read aloud to his buddy he added some expression. M read aloud without fighting Trent, and they worked with a word puzzle. The following two meetings showed similar results. Trent and his buddy read and worked together well. I noted, *"Trent sat at a table today. Seemed to help. [Trent] was reading aloud. Used some expression when reading questions. Buddy seemed more interested today.*" The next several meetings, my notes were similar. Sitting at a table worked better for both Trent and M, and M listened attentively as Trent read to him.

Trent began meeting with his adult mentor at the end of October. Because I had noticed that Trent struggled so much in class, I made it a priority to find him a strong mentor. Mr. C was the perfect person for him. Mr. C had worked with many students in our school already, and although he had never had his own classroom he had been an education major. Mr. C was young, energetic, and popular with the students in the school. They began reading the book *Hoops* by Walter Dean Meyer together. Mr. C noticed right away that he decoded accurately but

did not comprehend what he had read. *"He read an article out of a sports magazine to me. He did a good job reading it, but didn't seem to comprehend much of it."* I responded*, "I've noticed the same thing about Trent. He reads the words (decodes) ok, but doesn't comprehend. Since he sounds ok, I think he's fallen through the cracks."*

I suggested breaking the text into smaller chunks and discussing it after a few paragraphs. Trent's mentor noticed that even in smaller chunks Trent did not understand what he had read. *"We stopped periodically to discuss what we were reading and he seemed to struggle to pick up what was going on."*

At the end of January, Trent and his mentor were still slogging through Hoops. I suggested that they find something a little easier to read together and pulled out some books that might work well. Mr. C noticed that Trent was becoming apathetic and uninterested. Mr. C worked with him on many strategies including summarizing the text, breaking down words he did not understand into parts, and visualizing what he read. Although this was consistent with classroom instruction, Trent did not seem to grasp the concepts. Retelling what he had read continued to be a struggle for him.

In early February, after I had taken the photo of Trent and spoken with the special education teacher, Trent's teachers met with his mother to begin the process of special education testing. Mother worked nights and did not see Trent much, and was not available to help him with his school work. But she was willing to support the school and whatever we wanted to try with Trent and signed the paperwork necessary for testing.

In late March, Trent seemed to make some progress. Mr. C read a sports article to Trent. Then he stopped and asked Trent to illustrate it and write a caption. The caption fit the illustration. This suggests that Trent was more able to comprehend texts that he heard than text

he read on his own. It is possible that Trent's reading struggles had not been caught by a teacher earlier because so many classrooms continue to use round robin reading. Because he decoded well, his reading did not stand out as being poor; and if Trent's listening comprehension was significantly higher than his reading comprehension, he may have comprehended the texts he heard read in class. For this reason, it is possible that previous teachers had not realized that Trent struggled. Trent met with his mentor for the last time at the end of April. Trent continued to understand the text his mentor read to him better than what he read on his own.

For his Miscue Analysis, Trent read aloud an excerpt from Seedfolks, a book written at the 4th grade level. I chose to use an easier book with him because I knew his comprehension skills were lacking. I thought he might have more success with an easier text. He read it aloud with 96% accuracy, which indicated that it was within his independent reading level. However, when asked to retell what he had read his response was, "*like uh… these plants died. And the phone rings. That's it."* With prompting he added, "*does it [the phone] ring in Ana's room?"* Later in the year after reading the same text, he summarized it as "*about beans and growing up on a farm"*. Neither of these was an accurate summary; however, they were lines from the text. Some struggling readers hold on to one idea from a text and do not revise their thinking about the text, even after reading more (Keene, 2011).

Trent had never passed the ISTEP test. On his STAR Reading tests beginning in 6th grade, he scored between a grade equivalent of 2.5 and 3.8. In the middle of the school year while he was participating in the Buddy Reading Programme he scored a 5.3 grade equivalent, but this was unusually high for him and based on what I had observed surprised me. By the end of the school year his score was down to 3.8.

I interviewed Trent at the end of April. He said one thing he remembered about learning to read was it was "*kinda hard sometime saying the words and remembering them*". He reported that his reading had improved this school year "*by reading more books knowing to sound out the words*". One thing I found interesting was that at the beginning of the school year Trent had named four books that were favourites. In our final interview when I asked what his favourite book was he replied, "*I'd have to say the book I'm reading now… something about the principal's chair*". He did not remember the exact title and did not mention any of the titles he had listed earlier in the year. The book, Confessions from the Principal's Chair, was a middle school level book, and likely beyond what he could comprehend on his own. Zhang and Hoosain (2001) suggested that struggling readers often can not remember the title of a book, even if they have a specific book in mind. This may explain why Trent was unable to remember the title. It does not, however, account for why Trent did not mention any other titles or the titles he had shared at the beginning of the year.

Testing Trent for special education took an unusually long time. His testing initially showed a learning disability in math. When I asked about his reading scores, I was told they were normal. I shared my observations and the results of the Miscue Analysis I had completed with the psychologist who completed the testing. As a result of my extra data she agreed to complete more testing. The additional testing showed that Trent had an IQ of 59. This qualified him for the mild programme of special education. Most students who test as "mild" receive services including special education classes in all content areas and a resource period to work with the special education teacher. He began receiving services during the last few weeks of school and continued to receive special education services in high school. Because Trent was pleasant, compliant, and decoded well, he likely slipped through the cracks during previous years

of school and was never tested for special education. Had he not participated in the Buddy Reading Programme, it is likely that he would not have received the necessary services in the future.